THE WORLD'S BIGGEST GAMECUBE MAGAZINE!

NGC™

ISSUE #79
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INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GA...

GET READY FOR...

THE SIMS

THE WORLDWIDE SMASH HIT MAKES ITS WAY TO GAMECUBE. SIM-SATIONAL!

GBA SP

NINTENDO'S SEXY NEW GAME BOY TESTED TO DESTRUCTION... INSIDE!

DON'T MISS!

SUPER MONKEY BALL JR

GO BANANAS! We review this astonishing GBA conversion

PLUS!

- Conflict: Desert Storm
- Sonic Mega Collection
- Ghost Recon

RESIDENT EVIL ZERO GIANT GUIDE INSIDE!

HITMAN 2

BLOODY BRILLIANT! Exclusive first play of this fantastic elimination simulation

METROID PRIME

UK VERSION REVIEWED! See why it's the Best Game Ever inside!



DRIVEN BY PURE LUST
FRIGHTENINGLY BEAUTIFUL
MEN DROP AT HER FEET





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IT'S A HIT!

It's strange that some people insist that the Gamecube suffers third-party wise in comparison to rival consoles. Perhaps it's a hangup from the the days of the notoriously third-party-phobic N64, or maybe it's just a case of simple myopia.

Whatever the reasons, they're mistaken. And this month's cover star demonstrates why; Gamecube plays host to the best third-party games money can buy, and more often than not ends up getting the best versions. *Hitman 2* will be significantly improved over the Xbox and PS2 iterations, and looking ahead, there's also *Burnout 2* and *Conflict: Desert Storm*, to name but two examples, and more to come. Not too shabby, eh?

THINGS AFOOT

We've got some changes in store for **NGC**. First up is the Extended Play section of the mag, and in particular Compendium. Initially intended as a light-hearted but informative end to the mag, we felt it was always lacking a little, so we're expanding it, making it more substantial, and giving it a definite focus. It'll now serve as a view to the wider world of Nintendo gaming, with features on Japan, importing, and retro gaming. To this end we've secured the talents of two new regular columnists – so please join us in giving a very warm welcome to Justin Keeling, a resident of Tokyo who'll be bringing you all the news that's fit to print from Nintendo's homeland, and to Rachel Ryan, who'll be taking us all through the basics of the Japanese language, with an aim to helping us all muddle through import games. And there'll be much more to come in the foreseeable future…

ABOUT TIME

Hallelujah! *Metroid*'s finally here. Naturally, we'd love to hear what you think about it, and if you're as floored by it as we were. Write in to the usual address and let us know. See you next month!

Jes Bickham Editor
ngc@futurenet.co.uk

TURN TO PAGE 22
…For all you need to know about the ace *Hitman 2.*

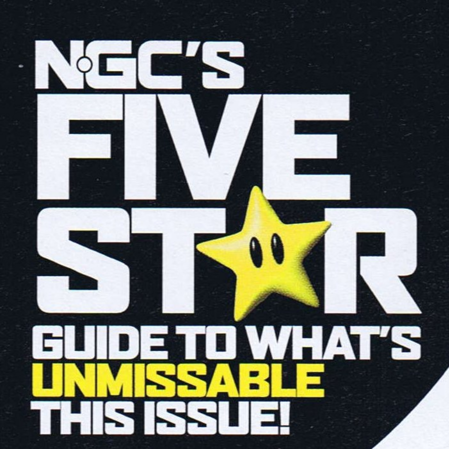
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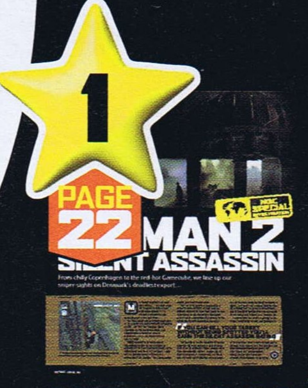


*For five of the best things in this murderously great issue of **NGC**!*



WHAT'S IN THE MAG?





HITMAN 2

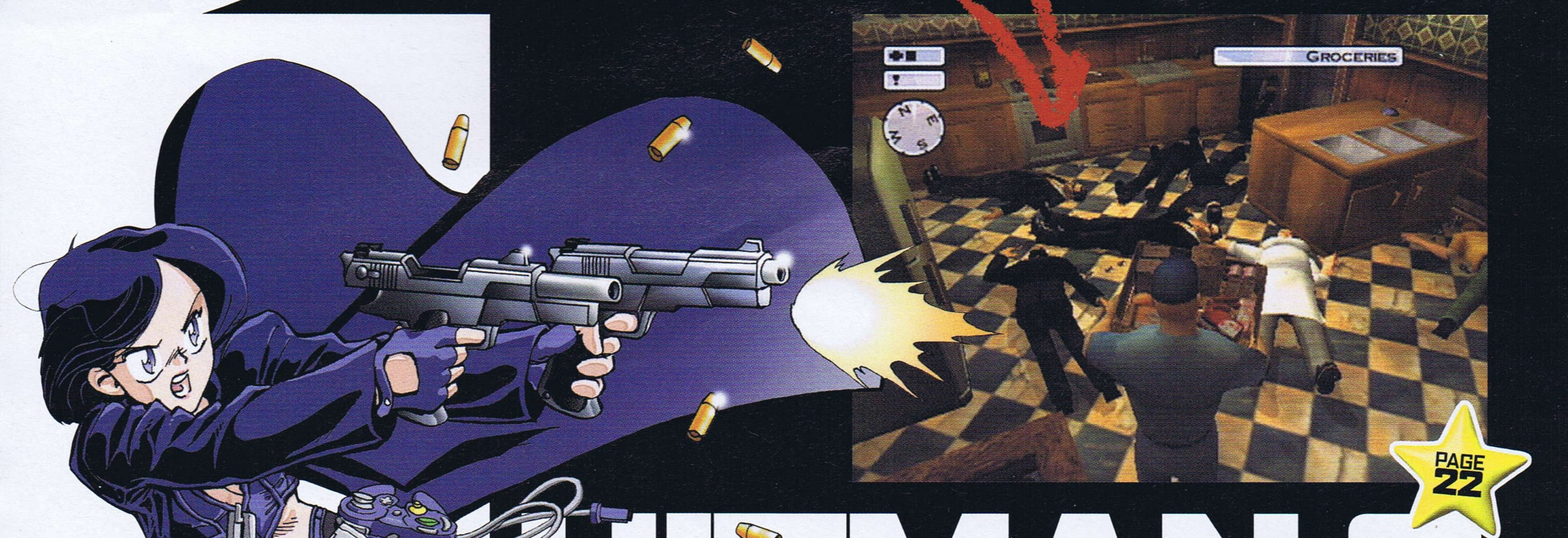
Kill people! Then boast to your friends about it! In a game, of course…



METROID PRIME

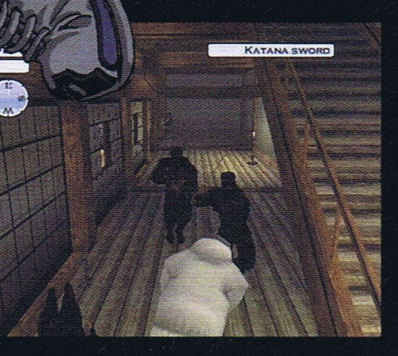
See how Samus took command of the Cube's top title…

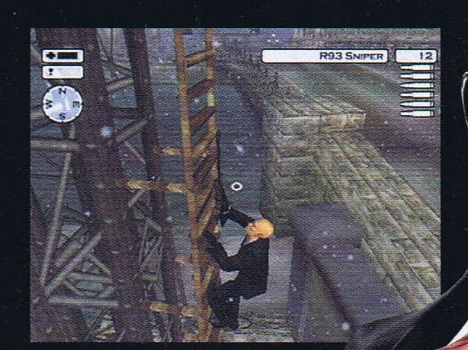
2 PAGE 30



PAGE 22

HITMAN 2





DEATH BEFORE DISHONOUR!

We get up close and personal in the latest, greatest piece of murdertainment to hit the streets since OJ and Nicole…

MEET ENJiKi

Us, sexist? Never! We've picked the delectable Enjiki as **NGC'***s new mascot because of her hard-hitting but thoughtful views on the upcoming Holy War, the defiant stance she takes against the Euro and the volunteer charity work she does in her spare time. The fact that she comes equipped with female assets of a fine nature in both the top and bottom departments and looks at us all sweet and innocent with those big cute eyes of hers are merely incidental coincidences.*





THE SIMS

Make friends and influence people in this reality, er, sim.



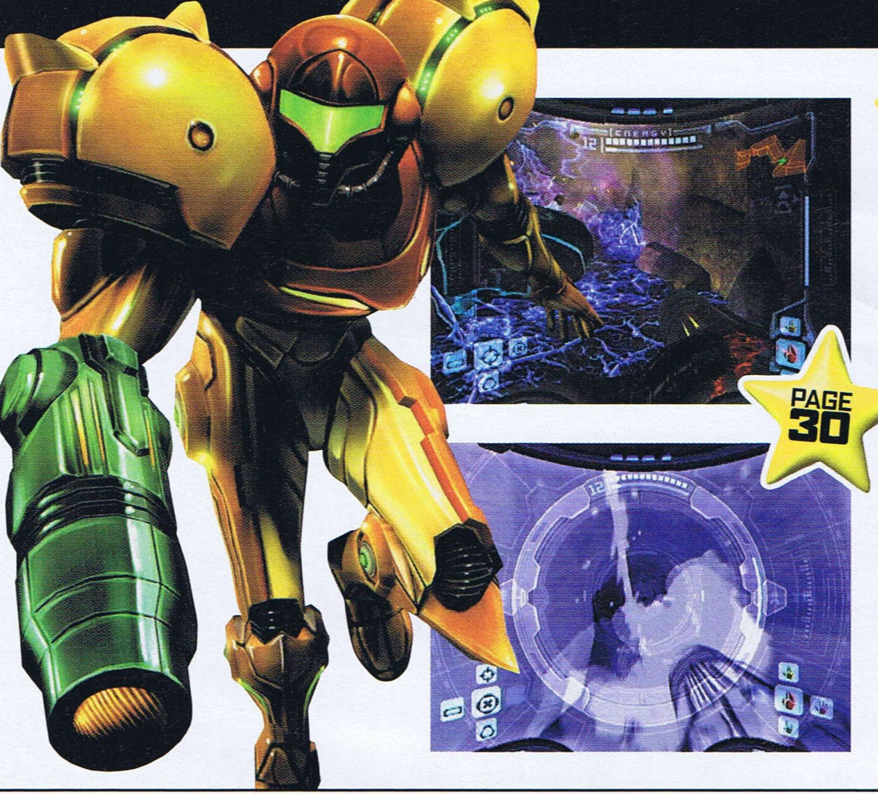
MONKEY BALL JR

Monkeys. In. Balls. And now on GBA. Splendid…



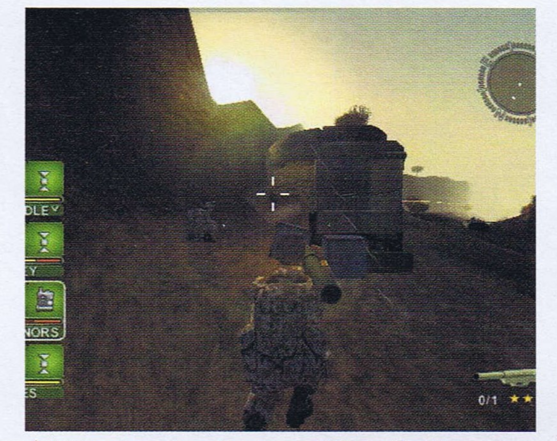
RESI ZERO GUIDE

Scare yourself silly and waste £40 in the process with our walkthrough…

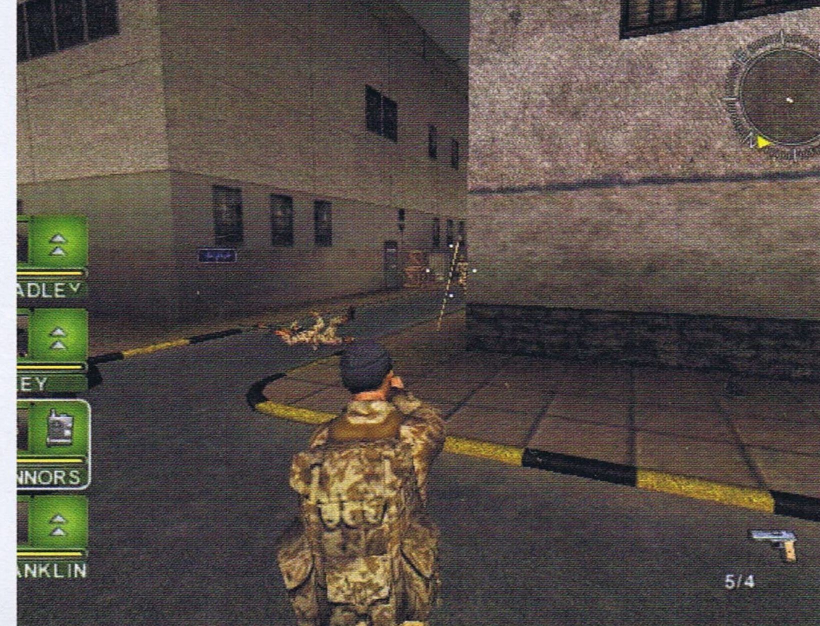




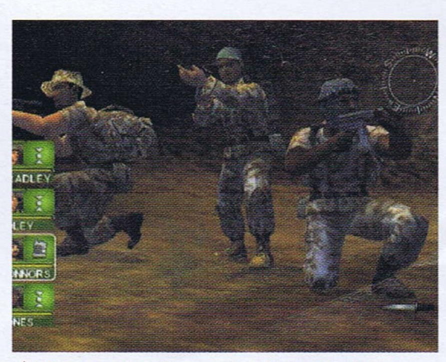




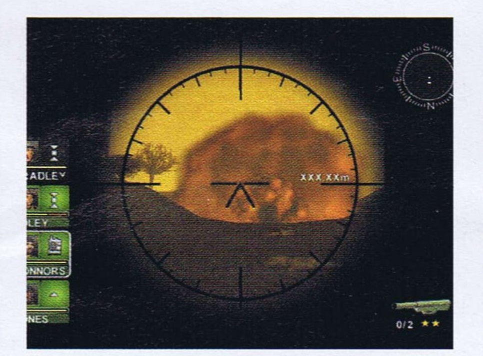
△ Different squad members are proficient with different types of 'ordnance' – which greatly affects their accuracy.



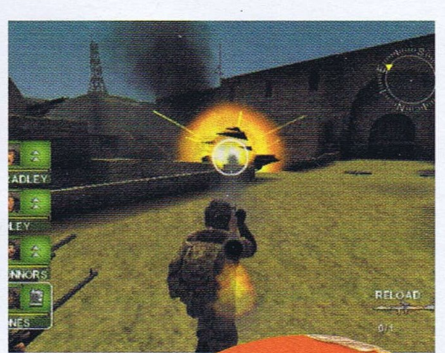
△ These urban locations seemed pretty tough going, with snipers taking shots at you from the windows above. Pleasingly, you could enter many buildings and shoot them back. In the head.



△ Your squad really are a handy bunch of guys. They even know which way to point their guns.



△ The rocket launcher. When all else fails, a huge fiery explosion will always clear the way…



CONFLICT DESERT STORM

EXCLUSIVE SHOTS

Hands-on with one of the most involving shooters we've played in ages. Tactical, intelligent, and with more depth than the Marianas Trench…

BOOM-SHAQ IRAQ! Fifteen missions of tactical action and buttock-chafing sand battles.



Unfortunate timing in terms of the inevitable (as we write) Gulf War 2 is something that could well give *Conflict: Desert Storm* more attention than it would have otherwise received – in terms of both criticism and increased unit sales. So it's a damn good job that *Desert Storm* is something that's genuinely worth looking forward to.

While an entirely different breed of game, it's very easy to draw similarities between *Conflict: DS* and *Hitman* (featured on page 22), at least insofar as its basic control scheme is concerned. Action can be viewed from both third- and first-person modes. It's also much more beneficial to be stealthy than to run around all-guns-blazing. This is where the similarity ends, however. *Conflict: Desert Storm* requires you to take control of up to four individuals across 15 SAS/Delta Force missions. Each member of your team has his own skills, from sniping to heavy munitions. You can control each member individually, while herding and directing comrades not directly under your control by simultaneously issuing orders – getting them to act as decoys, lay down cover fire, hold their position, fire at will, and so on.

> "IT'S MUCH MORE BENEFICIAL TO BE STEALTHY THAN TO RUN AROUND ALL GUNS BLAZING"

It's incredibly well implemented, and by no means as complicated as it

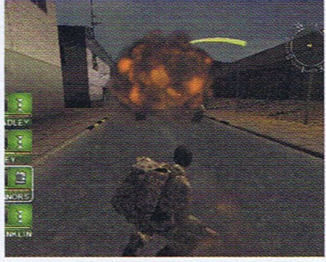


LEARNS! The land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, present-day Iraq, was the birthplace of the ancient, very sophisticated Sumerian civilisation, around 4,000 BC. George Bush's ancestors were still eating mud then.

Just in time for the release of the movie – er, war!



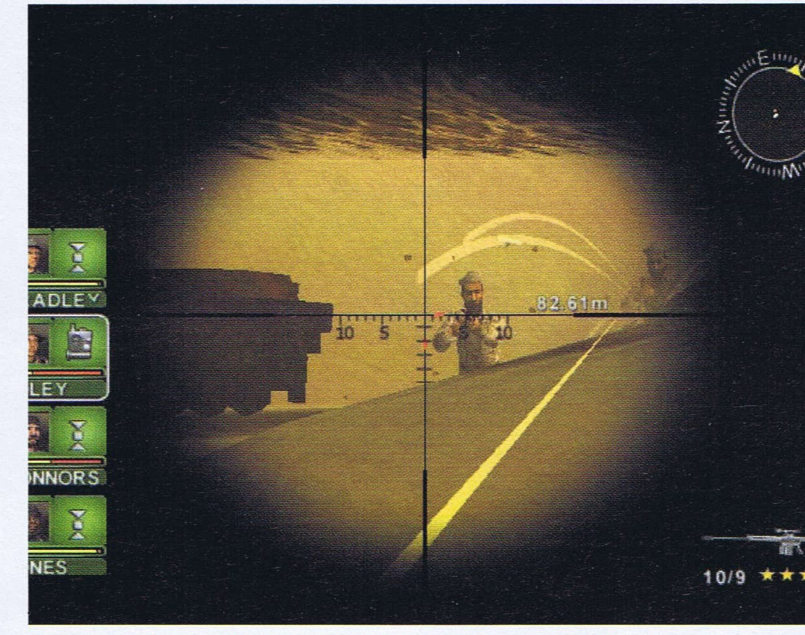
△ The Gamecube version has been slightly enhanced in terms of its visuals. Explosions are now much meatier, while the draw distance has been extended. It's also very smooth, with rarely a hint of slowdown – even when things get hectic on-screen.



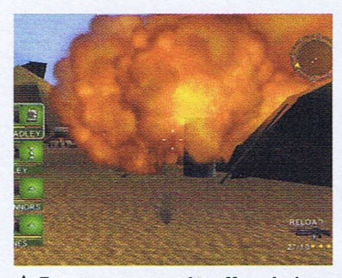
△ Grenades: effective against groups.



△ So far the best squad-game yet...



△ The sniper rifle is quite tricky to get used to. Line up the two red dots in the middle there. Over his face. As usual, head shots mean instant death. Lovely.



△ Teammates never let off explosives close enough to endanger you.



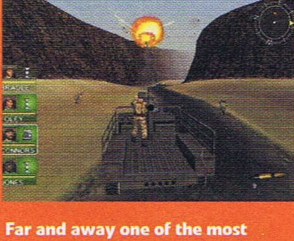
△ The four-player was exceptionally good fun. Shame about the frame-rate.



△ Running when shooting greatly decreases your accuracy. As it should.



POINT MAN



Far and away one of the most impressive aspects of *Desert Storm* is the level of intelligence of your comrades. They look after you and can be trusted with any tasks you send them off to do (providing you don't send them off alone into a 30-man gun battle). If you manage to keep them all alive from mission to mission, they actually improve as they earn experience. Their reactions become faster, and their accuracy increases, along wih their specialist skills – giving you an incentive to spend time planning and looking after your guys.

sounds – mainly due to the fantastic depth to your teammates' artificial intelligence. These aren't your standard bumbling drones prone to walking into crossfire, by any means. They'll automatically do exactly as you do, taking alert stance as soon as you prime your weapon. They'll watch your back and take out anyone you may have missed. They'll even lob grenades at potential multiple enemies when a suitable situation arises – but they'll never endanger you or your teammates in the process. They're fairly independent – you can even leave a sniper up on a ridge and he'll get on with the job. All very impressive, and removes any of those frustrating "why-didn't-you-do-what-I-told-you?!" elements frequently found in similar games.

So we're impressed, then. Very impressed. The game came as something of a surprise (we'd not investigated the Xbox or PS2 iterations), and it looks like it will offer an action experience far more cerebral than anything else currently on offer. While the focus is largely on action (things can get extremely intense) the totally non-linear way you can tackle the missions, alongside the necessity to use your teammates wisely – positioning them in places that will give you the upper hand when battles turn sour – makes each mission a highly involving experience. Furthermore, there's a distinct air of authenticity about the way you play. Weapons, for example, behave the way they should, with recoil, bullet speed and trajectory all being taken into account – so anyone with an unhealthy obsession with guns and the way they work (Jud, then) will have more than enough to stroke their beards over.

Couple this with a top four-player co-operative mode (yup, you and three mates can team up for some SAS action) this looks set to be another must-have title this spring.



NGC VERDICT

We like *Desert Storm*. We like it a lot. Visually, there's not much to write home about – it's worth noting, however, that it's substantially better looking than its other incarnations, with a much better draw distance and improved particle system, making for some lovely effects and some even lovlier explosions.

The beauty of the game is only really apparent when you see it in action. Controlling four individuals, positioning them, giving them orders and seeing your tactics play out successfully before your eyes is extremely satisfying. Thanks to the tight, wholly believable AI, it lends the game a certain atmosphere that's missing on GC – and the thought of playing through with three mates is the icing on the cake. One to watch.



UK SUMMER | US APRIL | JAPAN TBA

WHAT WE WANT TO SEE INCLUDED

- A wide range of weapons that enable you to blow holes in surrounding scenery.
- A huge variation in the types of missions. We saw a great guard/protection secenario through the streets of Kuwait – but some more diverse missions would be great.
- Better frame-rate on the four-player games. It's currently a liitle lacking, which meant aiming proved rather problematic.

ANTICIPATION RATING










THE KNOWLEDGE

- First-person combat and space flight action.
- Visit different planets and pop 'caps' in the 'asses' of many different 'alien' 'races'.
- Massive environments such as space stations and industrial complexes.
- More than 20 weapons spread over both the space sections and the first-person levels.
- Incidental missions to add variety as you search for the people who framed Mace Griffin. Including busting an interstellar cattle-rustling ring. All the big stuff.



THIS LOT ALSO DID...

- **Rally Championship (NGC/78) 74%**

UK-based Warthog is also the developer behind this enjoyable rally simulation.





Δ Doing a bit of space exploration, Griffin-style. There be aliens in them there astro pods – it's like a neon Eden Project, with E.T.



Δ Some of the weapons make enemies explode into reddish-brown chunks. Lumpy.



Δ Plant a sticky mine on the side of her head and see how long it takes for her to lose that stupid expression when you set the timer.



Δ Somebody call Fox McCloud – it's another bloody Krazoa spirit! Oh, the humanity.

MACE GRIFFIN BOUNTY HUNTER

In space, nobody can hear you cry like a baby.

Mace Griffin is not a happy man. Having spent ten long years on a prison island, he wants revenge because a), he was actually an innocent man, and b), spending that amount of time in a 'penal colony' has made his friends think he's a bit of a nancy boy. How wrong could they be?

In an effort to clear his name, Mace takes a job as a bounty hunter, believing that having access to confidential files will lead him to the people who set him up.

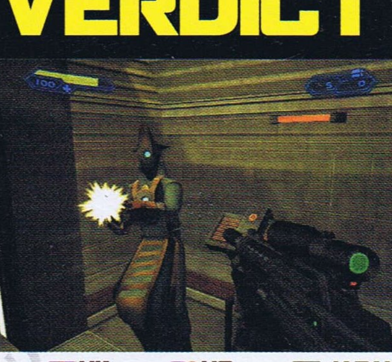
Of course, he can't just rummage through police computers, find a name, and go on a murderous rampage. He has to keep up appearances by doing the day-to-day bounty hunting, using his privileged position and large array of weapons to extract information from likely suspects. *Then* he can go on a murderous rampage.

Mace is also a skilled space pilot, so he can flit between planets and space stations, fending off space pirates along the way. The transition between space flight and the main first-person mode is seamless – simply walk up to the controls, press the button, and Mace is in control of a space ship instead of just a hand with a gun.

The game still has quite a way to go, but we'll keep you updated over the coming months.

NGC VERDICT

We've been playing a rather early version of the game, which shows both the potential greatness and the possible pitfalls of such a big project. There's no doubt the variety of gameplay and locations will be impressive. It's the technical stuff, such as frame-rates and textures that need sorting. At the moment it looks a bit like the N64 game *Armorines*, but we've no doubt it's going to be a decent effort once it's tidied up and optimised.



UK MAY | US MAY | JAPAN TBA



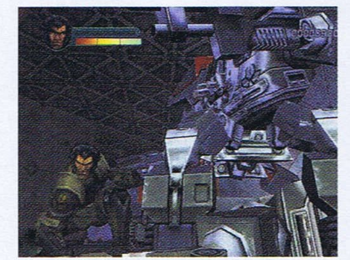
ANTICIPATION RATING






3

Six blades, but a serious shaving problem…



△ Giant robots are, excellently, a considerable part of this game.



△ Wolvie's powered-up attacks cause his knees to glow spectrally.



△ There's a slight cel-shaded look to *Wolverine's Revenge* at times. Although, being based on a comic strip, maybe that's to be expected.



△ The potential for breakdancing is endless. Endless!



△ Feel the pain, astro-boy!



△ Wolverine dishes some boot-hurt. Have it!

X-MEN WOLVERINE'S REVENGE

Just don't challenge this guy to a game of Rapsies…

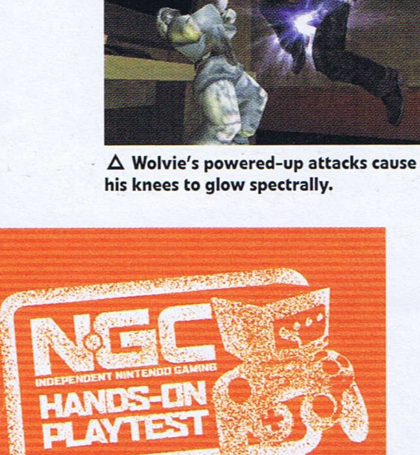


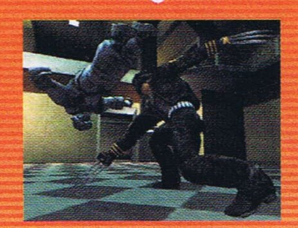
Wolverine's easily the best X-Man, so it's about time he got a game that did him justice. There's been a shedload of iffy pugilistic pap released on various platforms under the proud X-Men name and until now they've been universally rubbish. Until now…

Wolverine's Revenge sees grizzly, regenerative hero Logan tracing the experimental roots of his rebirth as an adamantium-reinforced warrior in the Weapon-X program. He learns that a failsafe virus placed in his body at the time of the experiments has started to incubate, giving him a mere 48 hours to find a cure.

The game is predominantly a close-combat action-adventure, with some light puzzle-solving thrown in to break up the hacking and slashing. But developers Genepool have worked hard to combine elements of stealth with the punch-ups. Wolverine has to make use of his mutant Animal Senses to locate traps and follow guards by using their scent. Sneaky kills will yield dog-tags, and if you collect enough on each level, Wolverine will learn a new move. He also has a Feral Rage mode, which sends him berserk for a short time, during which his attacks double in ferocity – and attacks are what this game is all about.

Fights look simply amazing, with Wolverine leaping from foe to foe, neck-snapping, slicing, dicing and stabbing like a vicious animal. Brilliant! The game's also littered with comic references that will please hardcore fans immensely. Cult character favourites like Wendigo show up, and in-the-know plot elements such as Sabertooth turning up on Logan's birthday to taunt him run throughout. Looking tasty…





THE KNOWLEDGE

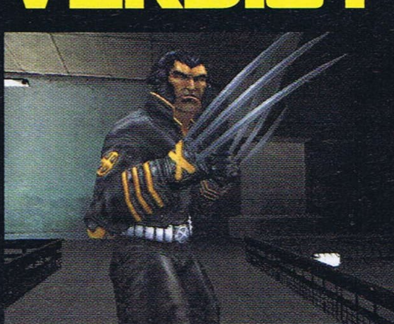
- You can unlock secret video sequences, often comically themed. We've even seen cutlery emerge from Wolverine's knuckles!
- The Genepool team includes many ex-Cosgrove Hall animators – the people responsible for the Danger Mouse and Count Duckula cartoons. Wick!
- Wolverine will only regenerate if his claws are retracted. They go through his flesh on the way out, you see. Must smart…

THIS LOT ALSO DID…

- **Colony Wars (PSone)**
A spaceship-flying-around-shooting-things type game. Really quite good, you know.

NGC VERDICT

Highly impressive, fluid combat with more animation variety than a Watch With Mother video may be this game's downfall as well as its selling point. Despite the team's obvious, painstaking effort to break the repetitive nature of the gameplay, what you have here in essence is *Golden Axe* in 3D. Okay, so there's a bit more to it than that, but the constant hack-and-slash element is bound to wear you out eventually.





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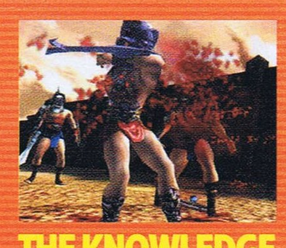
ANTICIPATION RATING











THE KNOWLEDGE

- A mixture of action and adventuring, set during Roman gladiatorial times.
- Not linked to the Russell Crowe film of a similar name.
- Environments to range from claustrophobic labyrinths and temples to wide-open battlefields.
- Moves and abilities are built up as you progress through the game.
- Draws heavily on the mythology of the ancient gods, so expect lots of far-fetched fantasy battles and special attacks, like out of the classic Clash of The Titans movie.

THIS LOT ALSO DID...

- **Mary-Kate And Ashley: Girl's Night Out (GBA)**
  In which the early-teen twosome get their first taste of 'liquor'.





△ That mask may hide the true identity of your foe in this battle, but the thunder-thighs give away the gender. Er, we hope…



△ As with most third-person titles these days, *I, Gladiator* offers a fusion of adventuring and battling action. We'd like to hope that there's more of the latter, though.



△ Smashing the crap out of marauding skeletons on the beach sees all sorts of boney body-bits flying around. Splintery.



△ Hopping along inside underground caves: all in a day's work for an aspiring gladiator.



△ We sincerely hope this isn't the result of some sort of super pelvic-thrust move…

I, GLADIATOR

An unofficial chance to 'be' big man Russell Crowe…

Those hazy home-computing days when you'd lie to your parents and inform them that you needed a computer 'to help with your homework' may be about to make a return, thanks to Acclaim's quite bizarrely titled *I, Gladiator*. Promising not just the usual mix of adventuring and fighting but also factual lessons in the disciplines of history, ancient culture and mythology, the developers are aiming to actually transplant you into ancient Roman times.

You start as a slave who has been hand-picked by the Gods – much in the manner of a prototype Pop Idol – to restore the Empire to its former glory. Of course, this being videogame land, the best way to do this is to chop down everything that gets in your righteous path.

The further you progress in the game, the more moves you'll learn. The more moves you learn, the more gory ways you'll be able to fight and finish off foes. The more gore you produce, the higher your Blood Meter goes. The higher that goes, the more super moves you can summon up, including raising 20 dead warriors to help you out when things get nasty.

And for the record? No, it's nothing to do with the ubiquitous Hollywood blockbuster of the same name. At all.

NGC VERDICT



After the debacle that was *Gauntlet* on the Gamecube, we're hoping that *I, Gladiator* will turn out to be the fantasy slash-fest that we're still thirsting for. The educational culture and history overtones worry us a bit, but hopefully they won't get in the way of making this a decent action-slicer. As for the way you can customise your own armour – that could very well be the icing on the ancient cake, as it were.

UK	US	JAPAN
SUMMER	TBA	TBA

ANTICIPATION RATING

1 2 **3** 4 5







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EPISODE I&II



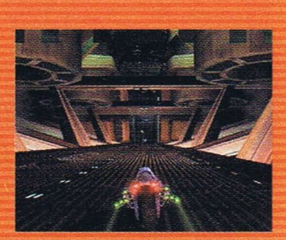
THE BIGGEST RPG ON GAMECUBE

YOU'RE A HUNTER. TIME TO STAKE YOUR CLAIM. STRAP ON SOME SERIOUS FIREPOWER, GUTS AND GUILE FOR A SINGLE-PLAYER RPG ODYSSEY ACROSS A VAST PLANET PULSING WITH HORDES OF MUTATED ALIENS. SURVIVE AND YOU'LL UNCOVER THE MYSTERY DEEP WITHIN RAYGOL'S DARKEST RECESSES.

CO-OPERATIVE TEAMPLAY MEANS 4 PLAYERS CAN QUEST ON THE SAME GAMECUBE. AND, FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER ON GAMECUBE, PLAYERS ALL OVER THE WORLD CAN GO ONLINE TO FORM BANDS OF HUNTERS AND DISCOVER NEW WAYS TO PLAY. AND NEW WAYS TO DIE.

WELCOME TO THE FUTURE. YOUR STAR IS READY TO RISE.

From the very first instalment, the *Extreme G* series has been gaining its fanbase, thanks to the way it places the need for speed at the top of its list of gaming priorities. Now on Gamecube, the futuristic bike racer looks set to positively blister!



THE KNOWLEDGE

- Futuristic racing showdown set in a world of monopolistic governing bodies and fiercely competitive rival teams.
- Six new race types, and the addition of racers with sidecars bolted onto them.
- Transfer between teams, depending on your performance.
- The fourth game in the *Extreme G* series.

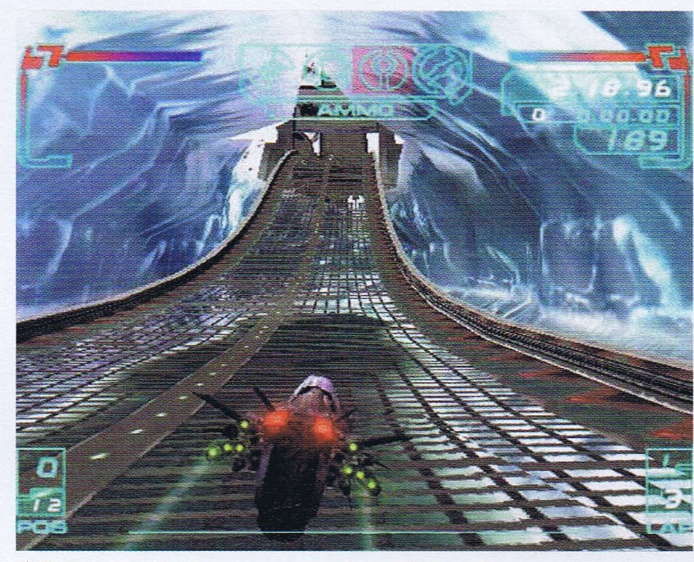


THIS LOT ALSO DID...

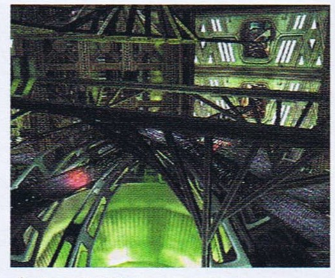
- Legends Of Wrestling II (NGC/76)

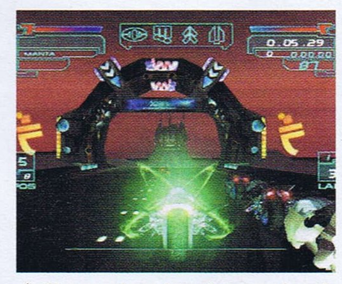
More Lycra in a ring than you could ever want. Or need.





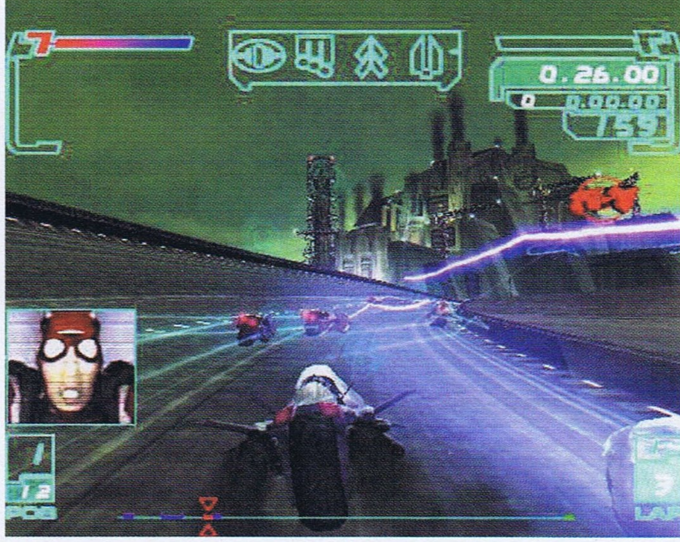
Ken's congestion charge appeared to be working a treat.


A track. With no cars on it. Probably from a fancy cut-scene.


Weapons have been improved, and now include pretty green lights.

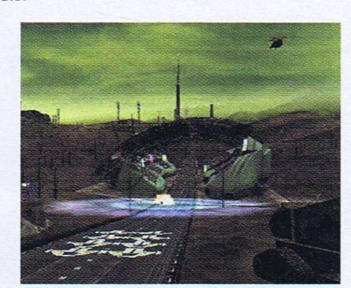


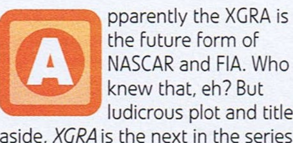
If in doubt, just let off a couple of shots and take out your rivals artillery-style.



Races are all-action affairs, and to succeed you'll need to keep your wits about you to concentrate on taking out your rivals.


Racing takes place both outside and inside in the future. Amazing, huh?


Replays show your greatest hits. And your worst misses.



XGRA

Not Xtreme German Rubber Action – another *Extreme G*...

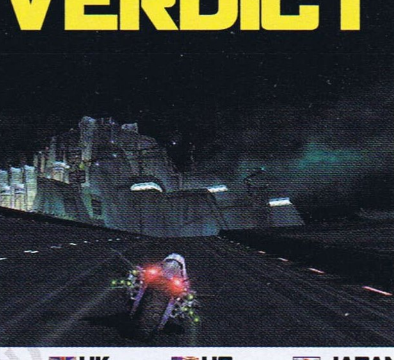
Apparently the XGRA is the future form of NASCAR and FIA. Who knew that, eh? But ludicrous plot and title aside, *XGRA* is the next in the series of *Extreme G* racers that have been providing gamers with a speed fix ever since the early days of the N64.

You're also part of a team, and along the way rivalries and friendships will be forged and broken. The option to bet on or against your team – as in old Amiga fave *Crazy Cars 2* – wouldn't go amiss, although it seems that most of the emphasis has been placed on straight racing and futuristic action.

Throw in fully destructable scenery, and yet another revision of the weapons system (this time you can bolt on sidecars to take care of the offensive part of a race), and we should hopefully be looking at more than just a stop-gap until *F-Zero GC* arrives home.

NGC VERDICT

The *Extreme G* series of futuristic racers have never had the subtlety of anything *F-Zero* related, but they've managed to keep things in check on the speed front. And the clumsily titled *XGRA* is no different, offering blistering pace and graphics. However, there's always been a nagging feeling that the balance between racing and using the weapons has never been quite spot-on in the series. We await to see whether that's the case here...





UK	US	JAPAN
AUG 2003	TBA	TBA

ANTICIPATION RATING






1 2 3 **4** 5

THE LEGEND OF

ZELDA™

A LINK TO THE PAST™

Nintendo®

GAMING 24:7™

Includes new multiplayer adventure

Four Swords

Find the Princess, before darkness finds you.

"...arguably the most loved game ever made. Essential. For everyone." **CVG.com**

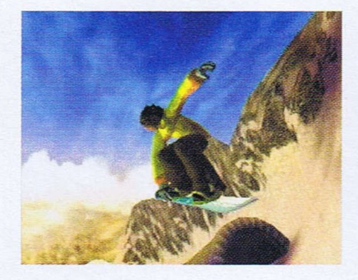
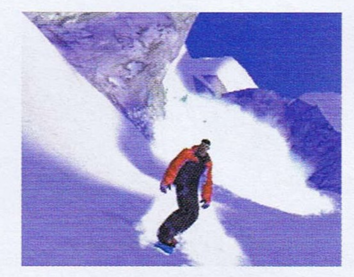
"One of the best SNES games ever, and a startling new multiplayer game. This is an essential GBA purchase." **NGC** 92%.

"One of the GBA's absolute musts, especially with the addition of Four Swords." **Gamesmaster** 95%.

28TH MARCH 2003

GAME BOY ADVANCE™



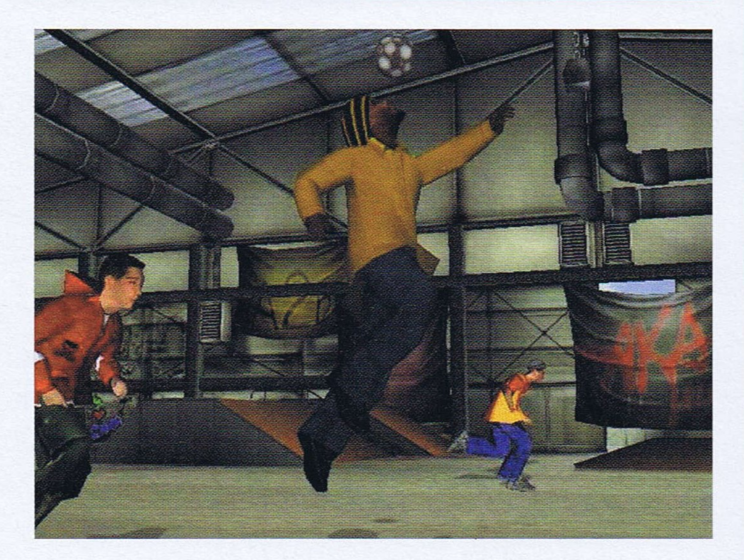


1080° AVALANCHE

The more we see of it, the more we want to see it sitting in our Gamecube. While we never really doubted Nintendo's winter sports sequel was going to be top class, seeing an almost finished version in action has left us drooling for more.

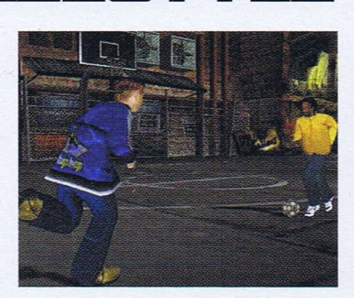
One of the best additions since the N64 version is the all-new Avalanche mode, which sees your snowboarder racing downhill to escape the onrushing snow. The scenery is interactive too, so as you speed away from the icy wall of doom, you'll have to contend with collapsing bridges, falling trees, and all manner of other moving objects.

The physics and snow effects look spot-on – the way the board flexes as it moves over different types of snow is mightily impressive, and there's a great wobbly-cam replay mode.



URBAN FREESTYLE

Taking football back to the streets, where it belongs. Except instead of jumpers for goalposts and angry neighbours complaining about broken bathroom windows in their terraced houses, it's organised sport in the kind of locations seen in skateboarding games. With funky characters and special moves, Acclaim plans to produce a whole series of urban sports titles like this. Interesting.



BURNOUT 2

No brownie points for following the highway code, grandma.

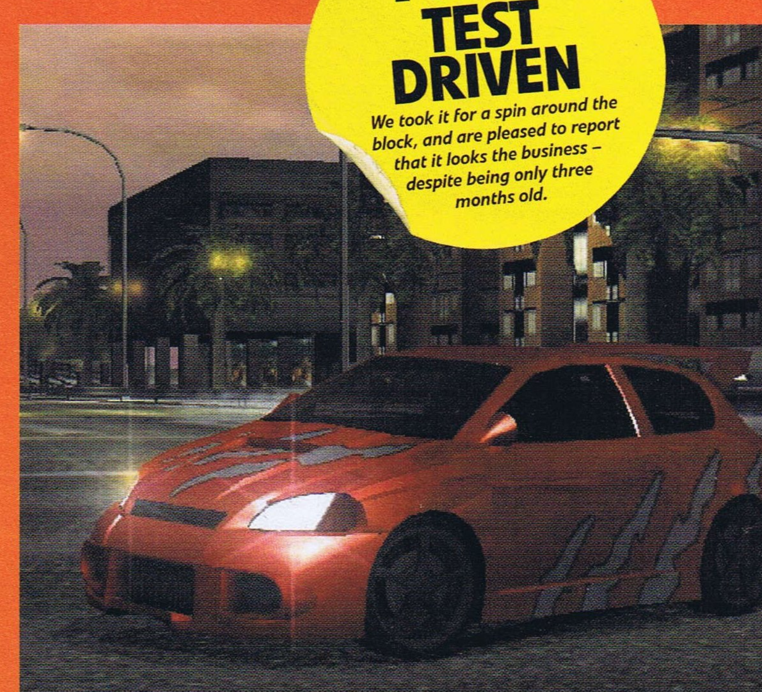
NGC TEST DRIVEN
We took it for a spin around the block, and are pleased to report that it looks the business – despite being only three months old.

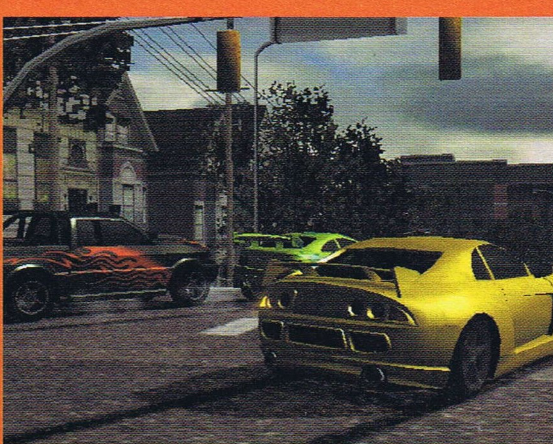
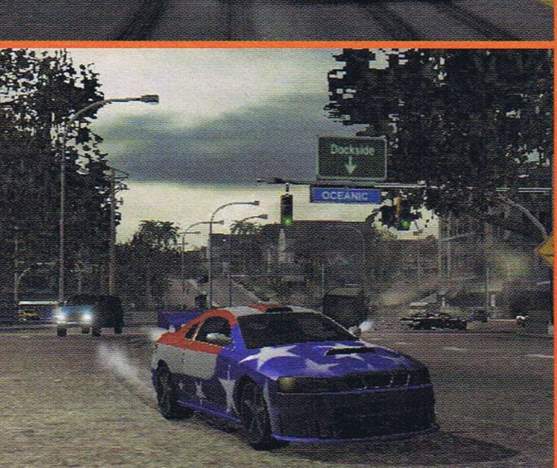


How fast do you want to go? In *Burnout 2*, you'll only reach the most cheek-flapping of velocities by proving your bravery in the face of heavy traffic – meaning the more you drive on the wrong side of the road, the bigger your turbo meter becomes.

By activating the turbo and keeping it going until it's completely empty, without crashing, the meter gets refilled and you achieve a Burnout Chain. The game's designers can link up to 30 of these in a single race, but we managed about three when we played the new Gamecube version. Practice is needed.

Enhancements made since the original PS2 version include richer graphics, superior sound (the engine effects are great) and double the number of levels in the insane Crash mode – in which you cause massive pile-ups, then watch the replay from loads of angles. It's a lot of fun, it handles well, and it moves at *F-Zero* speeds. Out around April/May.





ULTRA RELEASE LIST

The latest on every Cube game in development – updated monthly!

Welcome to our new Ultra Release List. It's been created to help you see exactly what's coming out when on the Gamecube. As you can see, there are loads of releases coming your way over the next few months, but plenty of games don't yet have PAL release dates. We'll be updating this page every month, though, so keep your eyes peeled for the latest info.

APRIL

Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	Virgin
Big Mutha Truckers	Empire
Blood Rayne	Vivendi
Conflict Desert Storm	SCI
Drome Racers	Lego/EA
Galleon	Virgin
HITMAN 2	Eidos
IKARUGA	Infogrames
Island Xtreme Stunt	Lego/EA
Lotus Challenge	Virgin
Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter	Vivendi
Red Faction II	THQ
Rugrats: Royal Ransom	THQ
Sonic Mega Collection	Infogrames
The Sims	EA
VIP	Ubi Soft
WWE Crush Hour	THQ
X-Men: Wolverine's Revenge	Activision

MAY

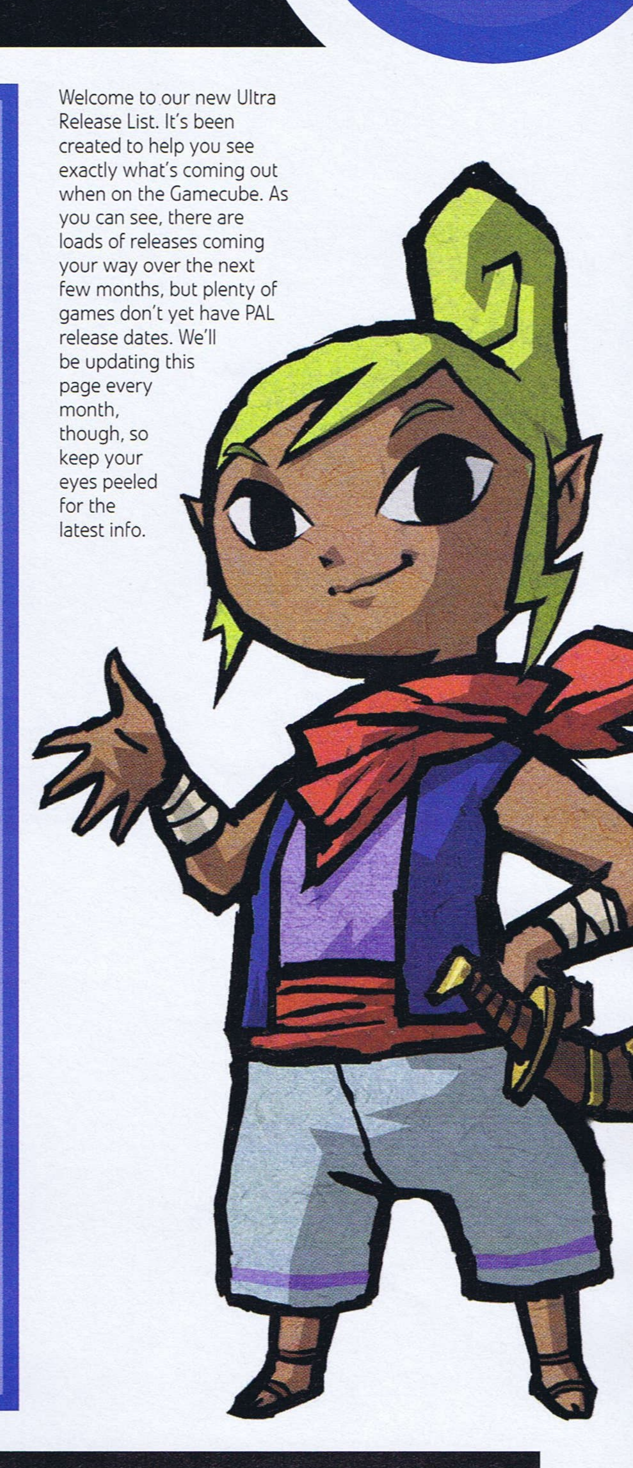
Black and Bruised	Vivendi
Burnout 2	Acclaim
Castleween	Wanadoo
Def Jam Vendetta	EA
Dragon's Lair 3D	Infogrames
Enter the Matrix	Infogrames
F1 Career Challenge	EA
Futurama	SCi
Gladius	LucasArts
ISS 3	Konami
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER	Nintendo
Lost Kingdoms 2	Activision
NBA Street Vol 2	EA
Resident Evil 2	Capcom
Shrek Super Party	TDK
Skies of Arcadia	Infogrames
Vexx	Acclaim

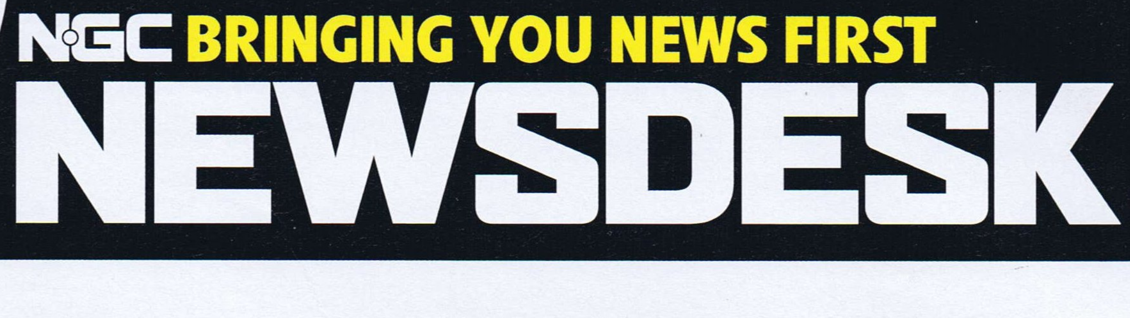
JUNE AND BEYOND

Bioncle: Mask Of Light	Lego
Finding Nemo	THQ
Freestyle: Metal X	Midway
Gallidor: Defenders of the Outer Dimension	Lego/EA
Gladius	LucasArts
Good Cop Bad Cop	Revolution
Hulk	Vivendi
Jacked	3DO
Resident Evil 3	Capcom
Robocop	Virgin
Richard Burns Rally	SCi
SOUL CALIBUR 2	Namco
Speed Kings	Acclaim
Sphinx	THQ
Starsky & Hutch	Empire
Street Racing Syndicate	3DO
SX Superstar	Acclaim
V-Rally 3	Infogrames
Wallace & Grommit	BAM!
Wario World	Nintendo
WWE Wrestlemania X9	THQ

TBA 2003

1080°: Avalanche	Nintendo
Animal Crossing	Nintendo
Bad Boys II	Empire
Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon	Revolution
Bulletproof Monk	Empire
Colin McRae Rally 3	Codemasters
Dead Phoenix	Capcom
Driver 3	Infogrames
Full Throttle II	LucasArts
F-Zero	Nintendo
Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles	Square
Gladiator: The Crimson Reign	Midway
The Hobbit	Vivendi
Killer 7	Capcom
Mario Golf	Nintendo
Mario Kart	Nintendo
Mario Tennis	Nintendo
Nightmare Creatures 3	Ubisoft
Nitro City	Midway
Onimusha 3	Capcom
P.N. 03	Capcom
Pikmin 2	Nintendo
Sonic Adventure	Infogrames
Starcraft: Ghost	Vivendi
Unity	Lionhead
Viewtiful Joe	Capcom
XGRA	Acclaim





NGC BRINGING YOU NEWS FIRST NEWSDESK

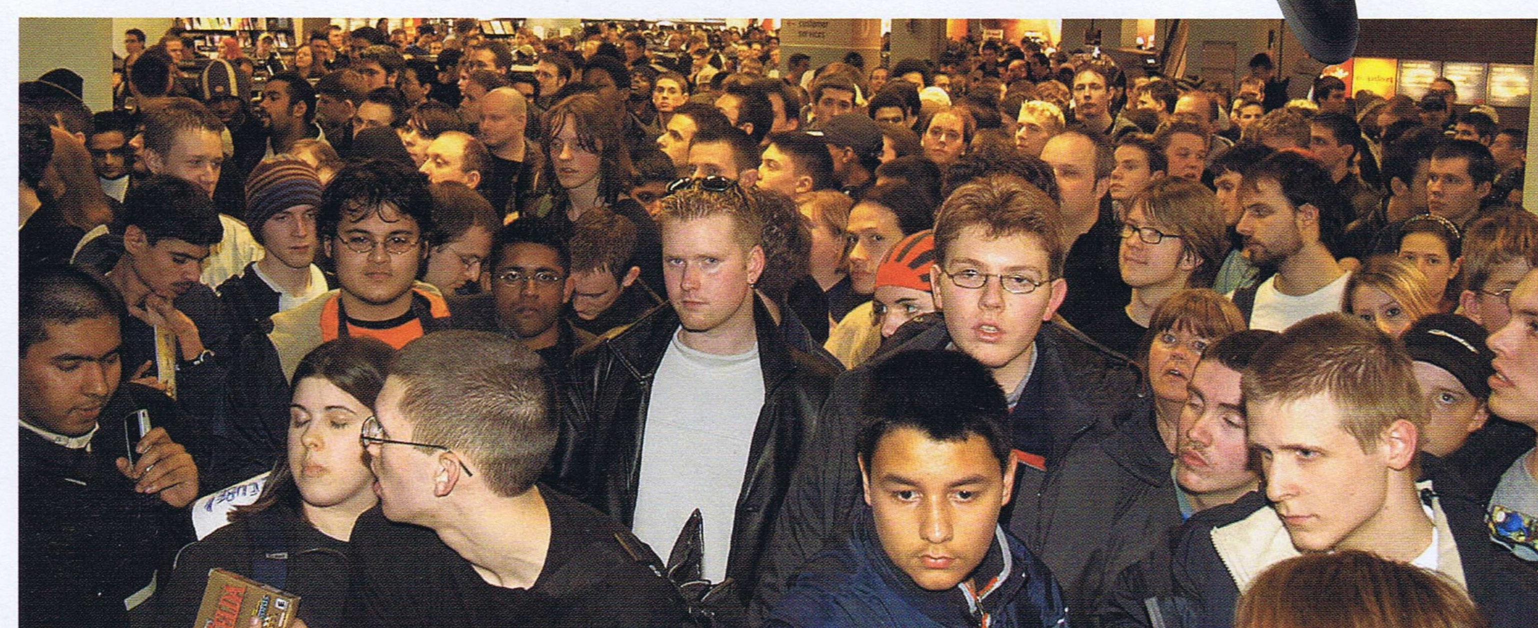
OUR PROMISE

We've spent years securing the biggest and best contacts inside the world's most important companies. Our news is properly sourced, expertly written and thoroughly researched – with chicken entrails and everything. You can trust (most of) what you read here. That's why Newsdesk is the most wholesome magazine news service on Planet Earth.

IN NEWS THIS MONTH







MIYAMOTO IN LONDON

NINTY'S SUPERSTAR MEETS HIS FANS, AND TAKES TIME OUT TO TALK ZELDA AND MARIO KART... BY KITTSY



Nintendo's legendary games designer Shigeru Miyamoto made his first European public appearance, drawing a sizeable crowd to the Virgin Megastore on London's Tottenham Court Road.

The 'Nintendo difference' himself, creator of *Mario, Donkey Kong, Pikmin* and *Zelda*, took time out to sign autographs and give away crayon drawings to the more than 1,000 fans packed into the shop's lower floor.

Some had camped out overnight for a glimpse of the great man, lured by the promise of a signed copy of the GBA game *Link to The Past* for the first 15 in line. They did well to keep their places. By the time Miyamoto stepped onto the stage, to rapturous applause, security guards had long since barred the entrances to the teeming lower floor.

Fortunately, since half of the store was a no-go zone, we'd had the chance to talk to Miyamoto and *Wind Waker* director Eiji Aonuma earlier in the day, during which time they gave us a first look at surprise new titles *Kirby's Air Ride* and *Pikmin 2*, and revealed that *Mario Kart* is complete and ready to be unveiled at E3 in May. Not only that, but they also hinted that a cel-shaded sequel to *Wind Waker* is in the works.

"Due to time restraints, we had to leave out two stages, which included dungeons," said Miyamoto.

"Some of the ideas we had that didn't make it into *Wind Waker* are already integrated into some of our next projects, which may or may not be



METAL GEAR GAMECUBE?
Shigsy's European tour took in several countries, during which the old Motes-or mouth was in typically unguarded form. One of the titbits he let slip, that was later confirmed, was that he's working with Hideo Kojima on a new Gamecube Metal Gear Solid. Yipes!

MORE ZELDA FOR GBA
A brand new 2D Zelda game is in production for GBA, developed by

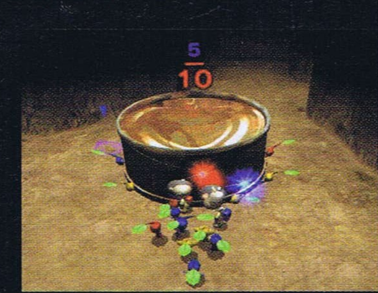
DAMN THOSE RAGGED NEWSDOGS! This month's news was written on on the walls in cheese by Bickham, Evans and Kitts, before being scraped off and fed through some kind of apple by Geary. This month's guest font: EvoBQ LightItalic. *Go, Evo! Go, Evo! Go, Evo!*

PIKMIN 2, KIRBY FIRST LOOK

Remember *Kirby's Air Ride*, the non-existent N64 launch game that was demonstrated in 1996, never to be seen again? It lives!

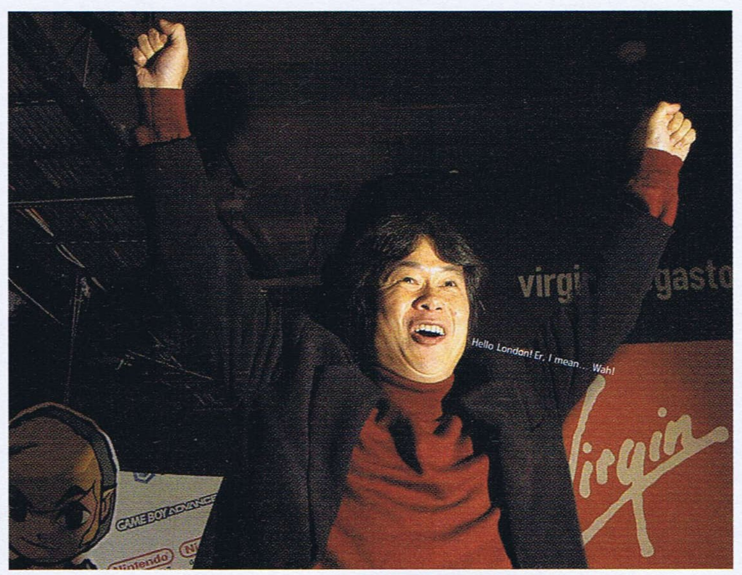
As if to prove that there's no such thing as a worthless idea at Nintendo, the game has been dusted down, spruced up and Gamecubed. The video footage we saw suggested a cross between the Race mode from *Super Monkey Ball* and *Mario Kart*, with Kirby battering opponents as he raced along on a floating star. Fast and extremely smooth.

The other new game shown was *Pikmin 2*, which now includes a split-screen versus mode, as well as two characters on the same screen. Olimar has a new companion called Loozy, presumably for co-operative games. We didn't spot any new Pikmin colours, though.





△ Kirby hits things with a big sword, while Olimar teams up with Loozy.



△ Hail Pigsy! Not even Jes's naked drawings of Enjiki get this kind of reaction.

making use of the *Wind Waker* engine,' added Aonuma. "Is this going to be the new *Zelda* game? I cannot comment."

"As a producer and a games designer, I'm hopeful we can make use of the *Wind Waker* engine for future games," said Miyamoto, all of which adds up to another outing for the cartoon elf-boy on Gamecube, as far as our speculation meter can tell. Aonuma joked that *Wind Waker* has taken so long to arrive in Europe because he took a month off for "baby-raising leave". Motes has been busy forming relationships with animal trainers, and having philosophical conversations about "the meaning of dog". We'll keep our eyes peeled for dog-based games in the future.

THE SOUND OF VIOLENCE

Asked about Nintendo's role in a games market where many of the biggest hits are violent thrillers such as *Grand Theft Auto* and *Hitman 2: Silent Assassin*, Miyamoto spoke of the responsibility facing software companies:

"It's obviously good business sense to make something that's popular, but it's not so simple for Nintendo. Nintendo doesn't make violent games like that.

"We are talking about the mass audience, and many people have their own ways of making use of entertainment. We as the maker always have a responsibility over how our products are used by the mass market. There are good reasons why no companies are willing to market *Grand Theft Auto* as their product in Japan. People have a sense of the danger of the current situation."

The future for Nintendo lies in the company's own unique in-house output, rather than the big all-formats third-party titles.

"When it comes to the unique attraction of a platform, I really don't think multi-platform games help the cause," said Miyamoto.

"While it's good to have many different titles on Nintendo platforms, I think what is more important is that we make titles only Nintendo customers can play. That is why it's important for Nintendo to come up with the best first-party titles and to create unique entertainment experiences."

So how will these unique experiences be delivered?

"Nintendo is heavily pursuing the connectivity between GBA and Gamecube, and we also have the eCard Reader in the US, so you can get data from a piece of paper. This is the kind of unique system Nintendo is constantly trying to create, and I'm positive more and more third parties are becoming interested in these unique opportunities.

"I can't really give specific examples right now, but we are working with Electronic Arts on this, and developing closer ties with Namco and Sega to create these opportunities."

Of course, Nintendo's massive roster of huge character franchises means there's the ever-present threat of sequel-itis, with teams constantly working on follow-ups at the expense of original, experimental projects.

"With a company like Nintendo, there is a danger that there's always pressure to work on sequels," said Miyamoto. "But Retro has taken on *Metroid*, and Sega is working on *F-Zero*, so in that sense more and more third parties can become involved in creating games with Nintendo's own characters. And, of course, you've seen Link feature in Namco's *Soul Calibur 2*, so there are many, many different ways to work with third parties."

So can we expect to see many more instalments of the big franchises?

"I really don't think there will be an end to new ideas being incorporated into *Mario* and *Zelda* games," said Miyamoto. "As for *Wind Waker*, we've incorporated many ideas from previous games, but I don't think people will see it as being a rehash."

"I think if another person is going to take charge of the idea-making of a new *Zelda* game, I think it can be a totally new product," added Aonuma. "There will be no ending. We will keep thinking about *Zelda* in new ways."

> **"WE DON'T MAKE VIOLENT GAMES. WE HAVE A SENSE OF THE DANGER OF THE CURRENT SITUATION"**



△ Split-screen fun with *Pikmin 2*. Expect to see co-op and competitive modes.





△ Are the different colours of their antenna lights of any significance?



△ See how it's a bit *Monkey Ball*? With tubes to ride, there's a bit of *F-Zero* too.

SHORT CUTS

WE'RE ON TOP!

NGC Magazine did incredibly well in the latest round of ABC results, with annual sales figures of 38,539. That means we're the best-selling independent Nintendo magazine in the UK by some considerable margin, and we couldn't have done it without you, our loyal readers. So thanks very much for making NGC such a popular choice, and here's to our continuing success.

RAY(MAN) OF LIGHT

It has been brought to our attention that last month's *Rayman 3* GBA review made no mention of the Gamecube link-up features – the link-up was not functioning in our review cartridge. Anyway, just to let you know it does link with the Gamecube version, for downloading new levels to the GBA. Sweet.

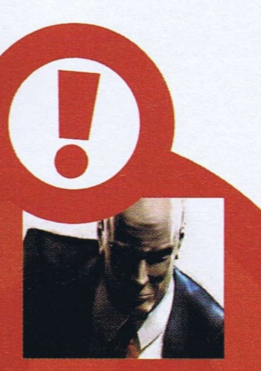
GBA DEMOS

Players in Japan can now test *Nintendo Puzzle Collection* titles via Gamecube download kiosks in stores. Games can be downloaded to an empty GBA for temporary trial, like the bonus games in *Animal Crossing*. If successful, the idea may be expanded by releasing additional Gamecube discs with GBA demos.

Capcom – the people behind Four Swords and the Oracle of Seasons/Ages games for GBC.

ANALYSE THIS
Business experts Strategy Analytics report that Nintendo could build a leading position in the software market by abandoning the console business to concentrate on making multi-format games. "Nintendo is missing out on the current generation of games players," said Strategy Analytics. "The day we stop making hardware is the day we leave the videogame business," said Nintendo chief Satoru Iwata, before wiping his arse with the SA report (note: not strictly true).

DISAGREE WITH MOST WANTED? Then email us at **ngc@futurenet.co.uk** or write to us at **NGC**, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW and tell us the three games you're most looking forward to. Every month, we'll tally up the scores on the doors and change the list accordingly.



THIS MONTH

Flick these glossy pages forwards a bit and there, in all its amoral, macabre glory, will be a preview of *Hitman 2*. Spooky, huh? The early Gamecube footage of this tasteful murder simulator has already got Geraint thinking about ways to 'off' his next victim (see Virtual Reality, over). Be afraid. But not very afraid.

MOST WANTED!

The 25 games you've been dreaming about in your sleep for the last 30 days…



1 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

UK	US	JAPAN
MAY	NOW	NOW

It's like a living, breathing cartoon tucked away snugly inside your perfectly formed Gamecube, and it's the reason why you play Nintendo games and not those on inferior 'other' consoles. And anything with plenty of pig-tossing action is, as Jud would exclaim in his amusing west-country pirate voice, "roight foine and daaaandy. Aaaarrrrr!" Indeed.



2 ANIMAL CROSSING

UK	US	JAPAN
TBA	NOW	NOW

"It's just like real life!" quipped Geraint when we let him loose on this wonderful mortgage-paying sim. It's as addictive as dangerous drugs to all who've played it, and there must be millions of kids worldwide addicted to it. Except you lot, as you made the mistake of living in Europe. Shame on you.



3 MARIO KART GC

UK	US	JAPAN
2003	2003	2003

The most anticipated follow-up after *Zelda* was subject to a press blackout, ruthlessly enforced by a team of creepy cyborg Gosen clones armed with drooling attack dogs. Probably. Until a couple of months ago, when Ninty broke radio silence to announce that it is – repeat, *is* – on the cards. Wah!



4 MARIO GOLF

UK	US	JAPAN
2003	2003	SUMMER

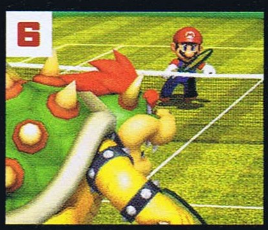
Why would a boring old golf game get into the top-five most-wanted Cube games? As Mark Twain said, it's nothing but a good walk spoiled, right? Not if it's golf as played by Mazza and pals – and with Camelot carrying the clubs once more, we're sure to be in for a worthy update to the N64 predecessor.



5 F-ZERO GC

UK	US	JAPAN
2003	2003	MAY

From the SNES on, every Nintendo system has played host to an instalment of Captain Falcon and friends indulging in high-speed death-racing in space. Bringing Sega on board looks likely to keep the faith in the arcade-racing side, and our eyes are just dying to bleed at high speed again.



6 MARIO TENNIS

UK	US	JAPAN
AUTUMN	AUTUMN	MARCH

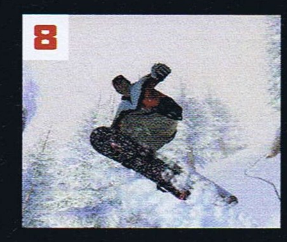
There could have been a great N64 tournament, but since nobody dares play Martin at it, there wasn't much point. With any luck the Gamecube version will have a handicap system so that truly talentless players won't have to suffer thrashings on such a regular basis. (*Sacked. Again. – Ed*)



7 SOUL CALIBUR 2

UK	US	JAPAN
TBA	TBA	NOW

If it wasn't enough that the green-suited elf-boy wonder has snared the top most wanted spot for the umpteenth month running, confirmation of his appearance in the sequel to what's still the Best 3D Beat-'Em-Up Ever has got you lot frothing at the mouth for some Link-fighting action.



8 1080°: AVALANCHE

UK	US	JAPAN
APRIL	APRIL	NOW

Here's one we haven't dug out on the N64 just yet, although no doubt we will in due course. The winter release date worries us a bit. Remember when the original was held back because Nintendo wanted to release it when the UK was nice and snowy? If it slips in Japan, we're looking at winter 2004…



HITMAN 2

UK	US	JAPAN
MAY	MAY	ER...

Soon to be satiating the psychopathic assassination tendencies of every repressed housewife across the land, this murderous game of murder should leave no doubt that Gamecube is not just for kids. And remember: if you get caught in real life, just blame it on the game! Worked for us. We think.



10 RESIDENT EVIL 4
Leon S Kennedy in a nice coat.

UK	US	JAPAN
TBA	TBA	TBA

11 KILLER 7
The sequel to *Killer 6*. Maybe.

UK	US	JAPAN
2003	2003	2003

12 ENTER THE MATRIX
Ooh, it's so deep and meaningful!

UK	US	JAPAN
2003	2003	2003

13 STARFOX ARMADA
Bye bye Rare, hello good Fox game.

UK	US	JAPAN
TBA	TBA	TBA

14 XIII
Isn't cel-shading so pretty?

UK	US	JAPAN
2003	2003	2003

15 VIEWTIFUL JOE
Cartoon superhero antics.

UK	US	JAPAN
Q2 2003	Q2 2003	SUMMER

16 BURNOUT 2
Drive like a madman. In a car.

UK	US	JAPAN
2003	2003	2003

17 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE
Make real life friends on the net!

UK	US	JAPAN
NOW, FOOL	NOW	NOW

18 STARCRAFT: GHOST
Joanna Dark who?

UK	US	JAPAN
2003	2003	2003

19 P.N.03
Project? Product? It's beyond us…

UK	US	JAPAN
Q2 2003	Q2 2003	MARCH

20 DRIVER 3
Driving Miss Daisy expansion pack.

UK	US	JAPAN
2003	2003	TBA

21 SPLINTER CELL
Clancy says stealth!

UK	US	JAPAN
MAY	MAY	TBA

22 AXES OF BUNYAN 2
Gigantist educational blade sequel.

UK	US	JAPAN
IN	YOUR	DREAMS

23 DEAD PHOENIX
Dragons and soldiers. No Panzers.

UK	US	JAPAN
Q3 2003	Q2 2003	Q2 2003

24 IKARUGA
Insane vertical retro blasting

UK	US	JAPAN
APRIL	APRIL	NOW

25 CONFLICT: DESERT STORM
Actually 'be' Saddam for a day.

UK	US	JAPAN
2003	2003	2003

WRITE TO… MAILBOX/NGC/30 MONMOUTH STREET/BATH/BA1 2BW OR EMAIL NGC@FUTURENET.CO.UK

DID YOU KNOW? After a particularly vivid daydream, **NGC** editor Jes Bickham foolishly thought that God had entered his head to bless him with the miraculous 'mad skillz' needed to take on Martin Kitts at *Mario Tennis*. Three swift whitewashes later, a devastated Mr Bickham announced his retirement from all but the most casual of gaming.

It isn't as bright as a GBA with an Afterburner. Nice clicky D-pad though.

OH BOY!

We've got one! Say hello to GBA SP…

As you read this, the UK release of GBA SP should be mere days away – but we managed to get hold of one prior to the Japanese launch. And what a beauty it is!

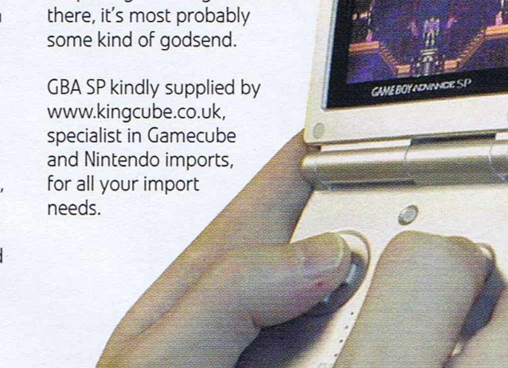
The main thing to note about GBA SP is that it fixes what was wrong with the 'regular' GBA. It's got a frontlight, which works brilliantly (which can be turned on and off), and it beautifully brings out the detail in games such as *Metroid Fusion* or *Castlevania*, which were otherwise obscured before by lack of brightness.

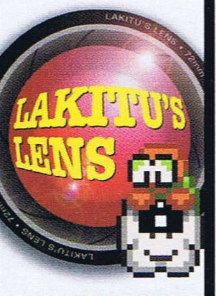
Powered by a rechargeable lithium battery, GBA SP gives you ten hours of illuminated gaming, or 15 hours of unassisted play-sight. It's wonderfully compact and tactile, too, offering a pleasing 'feel' and the silver finish and microswitched buttons are quite classy. It's a delight when folded up, too, small and convenient to carry. Also, it appears to be a louder than a regular GBA, although this might be something to do with the centrally-placed speaker, which delivers sound straight ahead rather than to the side.

But it's not all good news – there are some niggling details that haven't completely, 100 per cent sold us on GBA SP. The small, square shoulder buttons are perfectly adequate most of the time, but for games like *Mario Kart*, where you're constantly using both of them, their tiny size can be uncomfortable and imprecise – you can't rest your fingers on them. Also, the square shape of the SP means that when in the throes of gaming addiction, the (thankfully rounded) corners do tend to dig into your palms. Also, the fetching, space-age finish – silver, black or purple – is simply frail earth-paint, and until an SP-specific carry case becomes available, the machine is very prone to scratching. Be careful with it. Also, while the rechargeable battery is a brilliant idea, you're going to have buy a backup in case you run out of juice on the move – and finally, the lack of headphone socket is unforgivable, and having to shell out for an adaptor just to be able to listen to a game in privacy is shocking.

But for all that, the GBA SP is a wonderful thing, and it really does make a huge difference to playing GBA games, suddenly and vividly bringing to your favourite titles to life (just look at *Yoshi's Island* and see). Whether you really need to replace your existing GBA, though, is something that only you can decide, and and if you only ever play it in direct sunlight then you probably won't need one. But for the legions of squinting, despairing mobile gamers out there, it's most probably some kind of godsend.

GBA SP kindly supplied by www.kingcube.co.uk, specialist in Gamecube and Nintendo imports, for all your import needs.





REMEMBER THAT EPISODE OF 24 WHERE VIKTOR DRAZEN IS PLAYING ANIMAL CROSSING? TELL LAKITU!



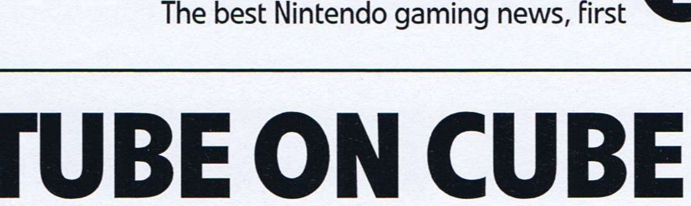


MUDDY MUSIC

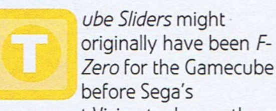
While wasting her life away in front of the television watching music videos, Sue Tunstall from Merseyside happened to chance across the lead singer from Puddle Of Mudd (some form of modern music combo, apparently) playing an N64 with his brat of a son. Excellent…

WRITE TO LAKITU'S LENS, NGC, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW

Entries sent with picture evidence will win a Gamecube game



TUBE ON CUBE



Tube Sliders might originally have been *F-Zero* for the Gamecube before Sega's Amusement Vision took over the franchise. You see, developers NdCube handled the GBA version of the future racer, and this, their brand-new Gamecube game, is more than redolent of Captain Falcon's whizz-bang racer. The game should be out in Japan by the time you read this, so expect an import review next issue. Let's hope it's not another *Aero Gauge*.



Wonder if there's a cheat to play as a giant N64 controller? Let's keep our fingers crossed.

VIRTUAL REALITY

NINTENDO GAMING MOMENTS 'COME TRUE'.

THIS MONTH Hitman's innovative misuse of cheesewire. For real.



THE TEST

He made a serious stink around these parts. Mr Big Cheese, the congealed mammary fluid crime boss of Bath. Somebody has to take a stand…

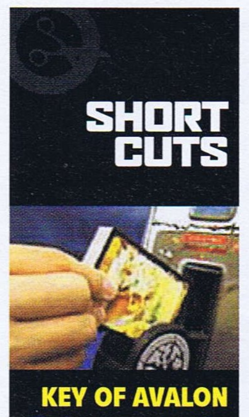


RESULT

Preferably somebody who won't come off second-best to a 1kg wedge of Old Amsterdam. Looks like our man just couldn't cut the cheese.

DID YOU KNOW? Martin Kitts claims he's the best player ever at *Advance Wars*. His editor would like to point out that this is patently untrue, having thrashed him on several occasions. Amateur.

SHORT CUTS



KEY OF AVALON

The latest game to utilise Namco, Sega and Nintendo's Triforce board is an intriguing one. Based around the ever-popular card-battling phenomenon in Japan, up to six players can slug it out at special booths that read your deck of cards. Once the cards are played by inserting them into the arcade machine's reader, the consequences of your actions are played out on screen. New cards are then awarded for successful battles, or can be exchanged between competing players. As ever, it's doubtful that it will see the light of day over in these parts…



ANIME READER

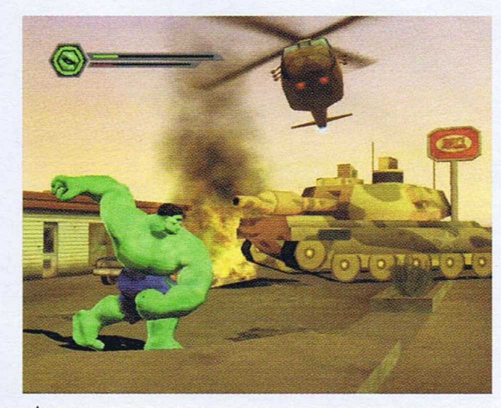
AM3, a subsidiary of Toshiba have announced a rather tasty 'Smart Media' reader. Plugging directly into your GBA's cartridge slot, it allows you to play 25 minute episodes of cartoons as well as displaying e-books and other downloadable content. Compatible with both the SP and old-style advance, punters in Japan will be able to visit special terminals in stores to choose from a list of varied content. A kind of electronic comic book, we suppose.



△ High on the chemical goodness of an Austrian smoked cheese sausage, Hulk can leap 20ft into the sky.



△ Strictly speaking, a man of Hulk's physical strength would squish this bloke's head like a Mini Babybel.



△ The way Hulk picks up tanks by their nozzles and wangs them over his head is super cool.

HERE COMES THE HULK

We get a sneak peek at the mean, green, angry fighting machine…



It's safe to say that Ang Lee's film adaptation of the excellent comics from Jack Kirby and Stan Lee looks amazing – as anyone who's seen the trailer will testify. Vivendi's inevitable videogame rendition however, takes on a decidedly different look from the movie, harking back to the old comics themselves with a rather distinctive, hand-drawn and cel-shaded look.

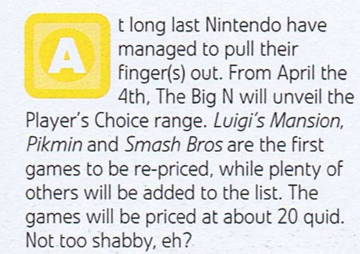
Intriguingly, the action isn't all smashing the bejesus out of tanks and identical goons either – there's also an important element of stealth to the game. Playing as Dr David Banner, your ultimate goal is to break into Alcatraz, the reasons for which elude us at the moment. In order to do so you'll need to be sneaky. Not huge, green and sneaky mind you – you'll still be in your normal Dr Banner guise. However, should you be discovered, our mild-mannered friend hulks out, loses most of his clothing, and rampages like… well… like the Incredible Hulk.

Quite how this will work out is anyone's guess right now, but as third-person film tie-ins go, it's certainly shaping up rather well. We do have one concern though – action hero games, for all the promise of their subject matter, rarely live up their potential.

We'll have a plenty more on this one in future issues, including a hands-on playtest. Soon.

BUNDLES OF JOY

Cheaper games, limited-edition double-disc *Zelda*, and a *Metroid* bundle. Nintendo finally roll out the promotions…

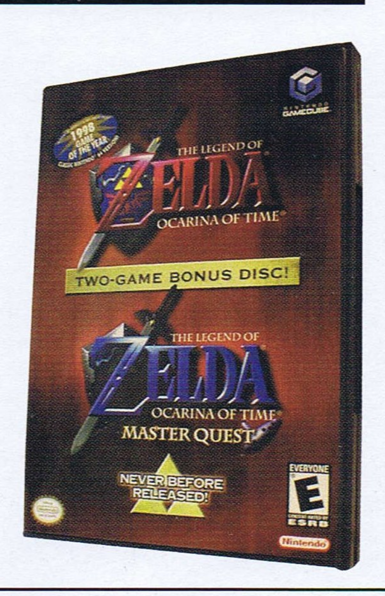


At long last Nintendo have managed to pull their finger(s) out. From April the 4th, The Big N will unveil the Player's Choice range. *Luigi's Mansion*, *Pikmin* and *Smash Bros* are the first games to be re-priced, while plenty of others will be added to the list. The games will be priced at about 20 quid. Not too shabby, eh?

There's also some great news concerning *Zelda: The Wind Waker* and *Metroid Prime*. The special bonus disc containing *Ocarina of Time* and *Ura Zelda* (Or *Master Quest* as it will be know over here) will be available alongside *Wind Waker* in special limited-edition double-disc sets on the game's release on the 3rd of May (US version shown to the right). It will also include footage of *F-Zero* and the rather lovely looking *1080°: Avalanche*.

Lastly, with the imminent release of *Metroid Prime*, Nintendo have decided to spend more than three million squids on promoting the title Europe-wide along with the biggest ever UK campaign for a Gamecube title.

Coinciding with the game's release, Nintendo will offer a bundle for £135. It will include a copy of the game, along with a black Gamecube, a controller and a special *Metroid*-branded nameplate to sit in the centre of your Cube's lid. Hopefully, this will entice people to try this truly stunning new game.



SEGA STOP SPORTS
Sega recently announced that they will no longer produce their excellent sporting games for Gamecube – instead leaving us to with the usual barrage of EA sequels year on year. The last of Sega's 2K games for Gamecube (NFL and NBAs 2K3) are reviewed this issue. Thankfully, Sega will continue to produce other titles as normal.

PHANTASY STAR UPDATE
It has been announced that the Modem Adaptor will be priced at around 45-50 Euros, which translates to about £30-35. In addition, gamers will have to buy a Hunter's Licence for a further £5.99.



IS MOBILE PHONE GAMING A REALISTIC THREAT TO GBA?

With Bandai's WonderSwan joining the growing ranks of handheld casualties and GBA SP selling over two million units in just a single day's business in Japan, it seems that Nintendo's domination of the handheld market is complete. But is that really the end of the story?

"Nokia alone sells more handset units every year than Nintendo has sold of the Game Boy in ten years," explains Chris Wright, Director of Business Development at mobile gaming specialist Digital Bridges. "All new handsets that are now entering the market allow users to play games, and they're becoming more sophisticated with every launch. Being sold as a communications device, they reach an audience that normally wouldn't buy a console but are happy to use a device they already have to play games."

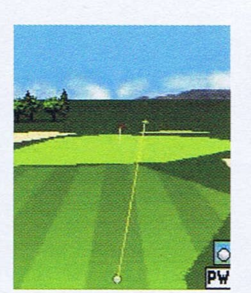
ENTS EVOLUTION

Mobile phone games are rapidly moving away from the likes of *Snake* and *Memory*. Java-enabled handsets are starting to show the potential of mobile phones as a viable platform. The puzzle title *Denki Blocks* has been successfully converted, while Digital Bridges' own conversion of *Bust-a-Move* is actually superior to the version currently available on GBA. More importantly, both publishers and developers alike are starting to see the possibilities presented by mobile gaming, as Chris explains:

"Publishers are becoming a lot more interested. We have already worked with Electronic Arts and Activision, as well as Japanese publishers, including Taito and SNK, releasing games from their arcade back catalogue." So the development support is certainly there – something that never happened with the likes of the Neo Geo Pocket.







▲ **It isn't the most powerful thing ever designed, but the little Nokia can do decent sprites and fudged 3D, just like the GBA. And you can't shout into a GBA on the train...**

GROWING PAINS

Still, that's not to say there aren't difficulties with the process.

"The biggest problem with developing for phones is that each handset requires a different variation of any game we develop," explains Chris. "There are a huge number of new handsets being introduced into the market and it becomes extremely difficult to develop across such a wide range of devices. As for dev kits, we do get some, as well as prototypes, but with the rapid evolution of the market these tools are immature and we often end up developing for devices that are already released. Also, phones often have no dedicated hardware – including input hardware like a joystick – so we have to work with the power and interface provided by the phone. In many respects, developing for phones compares more to PC rather than console development: massive variations in power, no standard environment, and also a device that is not primarily designed to play games."

"ALL NEW MOBILE HANDSETS ON THE MARKET ALLOW USERS TO PLAY GAMES"



Moreover, phones, by their very nature, have far less memory to play with, so the games have to be that much smaller – but is this necessarily a bad thing?

Mobile phone games currently retail at between £5 to £15. If you buy a game you don't like, it's not as though you've lost an enormous sum of money. If you happen to love the title you've purchased, on the other hand, you can continue to buy or download new levels. This kind of episodic gaming is something that would be unthinkable on GBA, with carts weighing in at a pricey £25 to £30, and its inability to connect to a network of any kind.

FIGHT FOR THE FUTURE

So will mobile phones and GBA eventually end up in direct competition then? The experts don't seem to think so. With a far wider demographic, including older users and a larger proportion of females, the *types* of games will need to be different.

"Our experience from SMS and WAP gaming is that the most popular games are Tamagotchi affairs, or games with a love or flirting aspect," says Chris.

"So yes, there will be a much wider range of games, including light entertainment, as well as the hardcore titles. We think there is a huge opportunity to widen the demographic of players, as well as pulling them into the more traditional games market.

"Mobile phone games and the GBA won't compete head to head. Mobile games will always be somewhat different from the GBA, partly due to the wider mass-market audience, which will encourage simpler, cheaper, and less time-intensive games. But the lines between the two devices *will* become more blurred..."

ANYTHING YOU CAN DO...

While it may take some time for mobile phones to be able to match the complexity of gameplay found in something like *Advance Wars*, the simple fact that phones are communication devices opens up many potential applications for the future of handheld gaming. "Games can evolve to include community aspects such as high-score postings for competitions, and ultimately to multiplayer and massively multiplayer and/or real-time multiplayer games," explains Chris Wright of Digital Bridges. "Another advantage of the mobile phone is that games can be downloaded over the air, which means people can buy games by simply surfing to a WAP site or seeing a game advertised. The speed of evolution will continue over the next three years as handset manufacturers try to outsell each other. There is already talk of specialist 3D hardware for phones."

Together with mobile phones camera- and video-streaming features, these multimedia platforms will begin to offer something vastly different to game-specific consoles...

Just like the US and Japanese versions, your first 30 days will be free of charge. Also, for those still hankering after a keyboard without having to fork out £60 to import one, there could be some light at the end of the tunnel if you pop along to http://www.pantsofevilgamers.com/kb/ The clever chaps who own the site have developed a GC keyboard adaptor.

HARVEST MOON FOR THE UK!!!
Hooray for Ubi Soft! Why? Well, they've signed up Harvest Moon and will be publishing it here in October! Almost makes us want to cry. Maybe Nintendo can give them Animal Crossing next. Please?



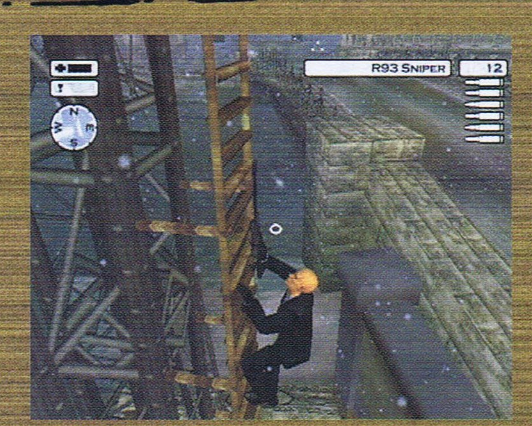
IF LOOKS COULD KILL

Thanks to the Gamecube's crisp video output and the extra development time Io Interactive's team has been able to devote to tidying up the graphics, this will be the nicest looking version of *Hitman 2*. No extra levels or anything like that, just sharper, smoother visuals.

NGC SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

HITMAN 2 SILENT ASSASSIN

From chilly Copenhagen to the red-hot Gamecube, we line up our sniper-sights on Denmark's deadliest export…



△ Fancy some sniping? You can choose plenty of suitable locations for a long-range assassination attempt.



Murdering people just to steal their clothes… and then using the disguise to help murder even more people? On a Nintendo console? Something's not quite right here… But when you're talking about one of the biggest, most controversial games on PS2 – the title that knocked *Mario Sunshine* off the top of the charts, and elicited death threats from crazed individuals – there are clearly no hard and fast rules.

NGC travelled to Io Interactive in Copenhagen to find out what all the fuss was about, and became the first (and, so far, only) people outside of the company's own staff to play the excellent Gamecube conversion of the darkest, most open-ended stealth game we've seen. The aim of the game is to complete a series of assassinations of high-ranking military officers and organised crime bosses, culminating in the rescue of a kidnapped priest and the restoration of harmony to the whole world (until the sequel, anyway).

The beauty of *Hitman* is the freedom the game gives for choosing your own path through each of its 20 missions. There's always more than one solution, depending on how accomplished a player you are. When you start out, you'll find that most missions can be finished simply by killing everyone in sight – bad guys and innocent civilians alike. By breaking out the pump-action shotgun, you're bound to get the man you were paid to kill, along with a few bonus freebies, too.

However, the real skill is in getting to the target, completing the job, and getting out of there before anyone even realises you've arrived. If you can make it through an entire level without arousing suspicion, kill your target and escape without being spotted, you'll earn the coveted Silent

> "IF YOU CAN KILL YOUR TARGET WITHOUT BEING SPOTTED YOU'LL EARN THE SILENT ASSASSIN RATING"



CENSORED?

No doubt you've heard all the fuss about the first PS2 version and its Sikh-offending content, a controversy which was fuelled by The Sun newspaper and lead to a number of changes in subsequent editions. But don't worry, because the game hasn't really been censored at all. Rumours about entire levels being dropped and characters removed are completely untrue. The only changes are a bottle of Jack Daniels which has been removed from a temple, a reference to 'towelheads', which has been taken out, and one foreign-language comment which guards no longer include in their list of random phrases. Hardly damaging to the essence of the game.

ANATOMY OF A HIT

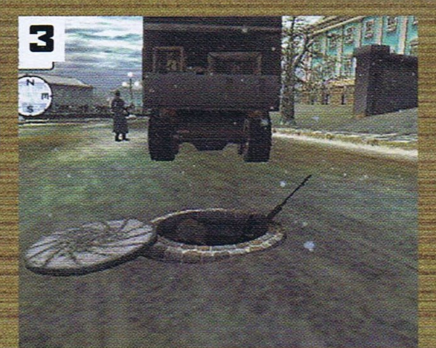
The chance of a weekend city break in St Petersburg? Let's just call it a working vacation…



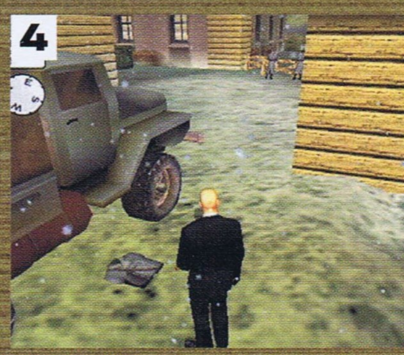
The baroque, 19th Century train station at St Petersburg – as picturesque a place as any to take on a new contract.



There's a sniper rifle stashed in one of the lockers. Make sure nobody sees you walking around with it, okay?



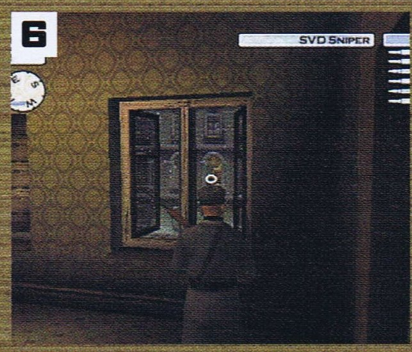
Sneak your way through the stinky sewers to find a quiet way out into the streets, away from any curious civilians or officials.



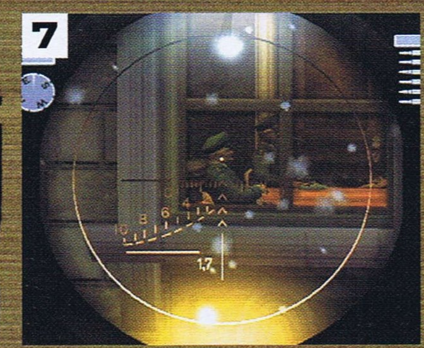
As luck would have it, there's a Russian army uniform behind a roadblock, just lying on the ground near this supply truck.



All snugly wrapped up in wooly soldier clothes, Hitman heads towards the government building, to seek out his target.



We're hiding in a tenement building across the street, waiting for the meeting to begin. Any moment now…



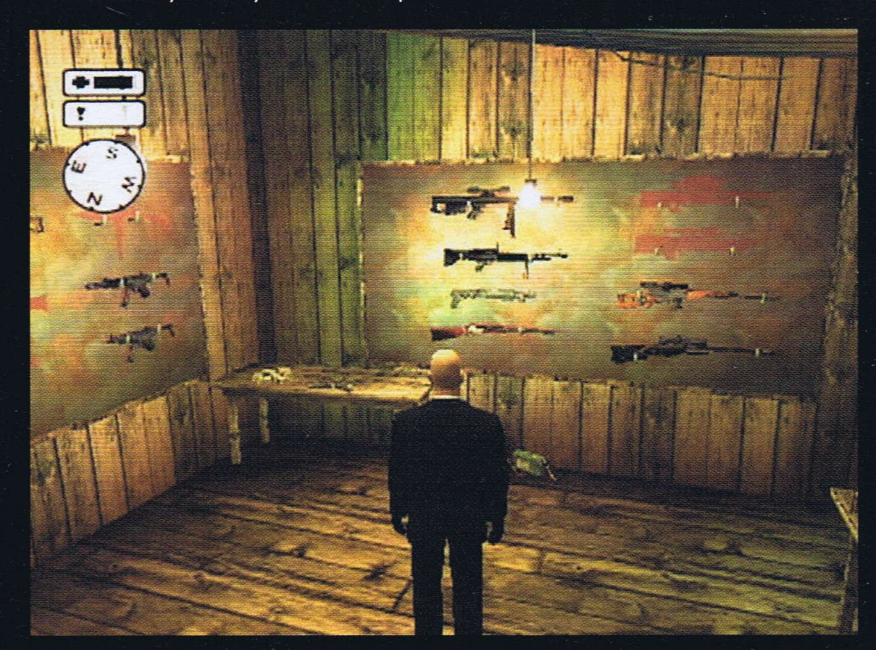
Bingo. Use radio reports to figure out which general is the target, take a slow, deep breath, and then make that shot.



One bullet, one dead general, and nobody outside of the meeting room is any the wiser. Silent Assassin! Nicely done…

TOOL SHED

All the weapons you're carrying when you finish one of the game's 20 missions are stored permanently in the garden shed. Because 47's carrying capacity is limited to one rifle or large weapon at a time, (to avoid suspicion you can't be tooled up to the hilt) so missions will have to be finished many times if you want to complete the whole collection.



RAG DOLL

■ The game's rag-doll physics technology means dead or drugged bodies move with disturbing realism. They bounce off walls, tumble down stairs, and react according to where you shoot them. And when you're dragging one around, its arms and legs catch on solid objects, flopping around in the most horrible way. This game is not for the weak of stomach.



■ Use a powerful weapon like this pump-action shotgun and it's possible to juggle people through the air. Honestly, they can fly for miles (or until they hit something). It passes the time, anyway.





Assassin rating at the end of the mission, rather than the slightly shameful Hatchet Man or Mass Murderer ratings given to those with itchy trigger-fingers.

Levels are packed with wandering characters, all of whom will react in a particular way if they spot you doing something dodgy, such as picking a lock or dumping a corpse down a manhole. Civilians will panic and inform the authorities – potential enemies are likely to shoot first and ask questions later.

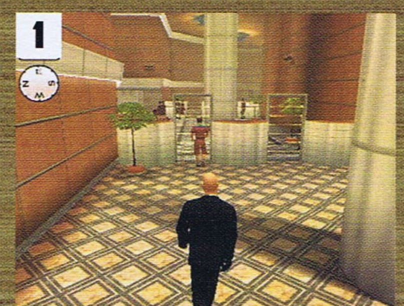
Even being seen in the wrong place can cause trouble, so it's lucky 47 is also a master of disguise. By stealing clothes (usually from dead bodies), he can stroll past security cameras, gain access to restricted areas, or walk into military bases (and get saluted by the soldiers). It's all about using the right disguise at the right time – bear in mind that 47 is a large, bald white man, so there are some places where he'll

> **"CIVILIANS WILL PANIC AND CALL THE AUTHORITIES – ENEMIES SHOOT FIRST, THEN ASK QUESTIONS LATER"**

EXTRA SPICY

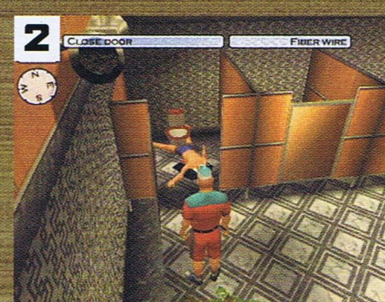
Use your head and you'll see any number of possible ways to assassinate your target.

1



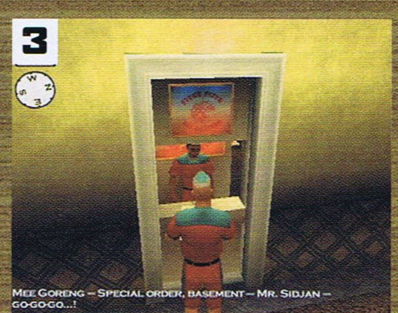
Our target is well-defended, past metal detectors and armed guards. But that pizza boy seems to have clearance through.

2



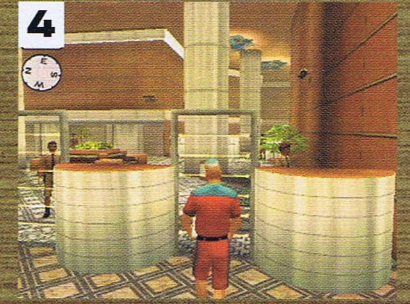
So wait for him to return, follow him when he goes for a toilet break, and wring his neck with the ceramic fibre wire.

3



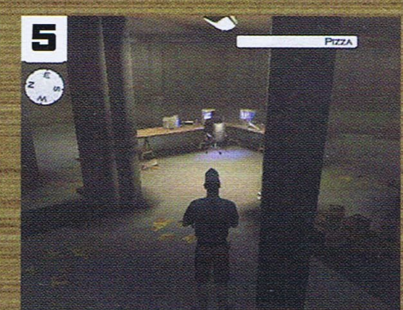
Over to the pizza window for a special delivery order and whaddyaknow – it's for our man in the basement. We have a way in.

4



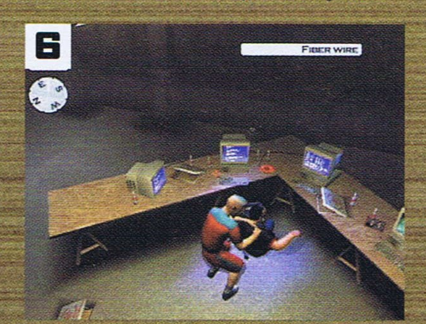
Through the metal detectors, easy as pie, with the fibre wire stashed in the pizza box. Those fools have no idea who they're dealing with.

5

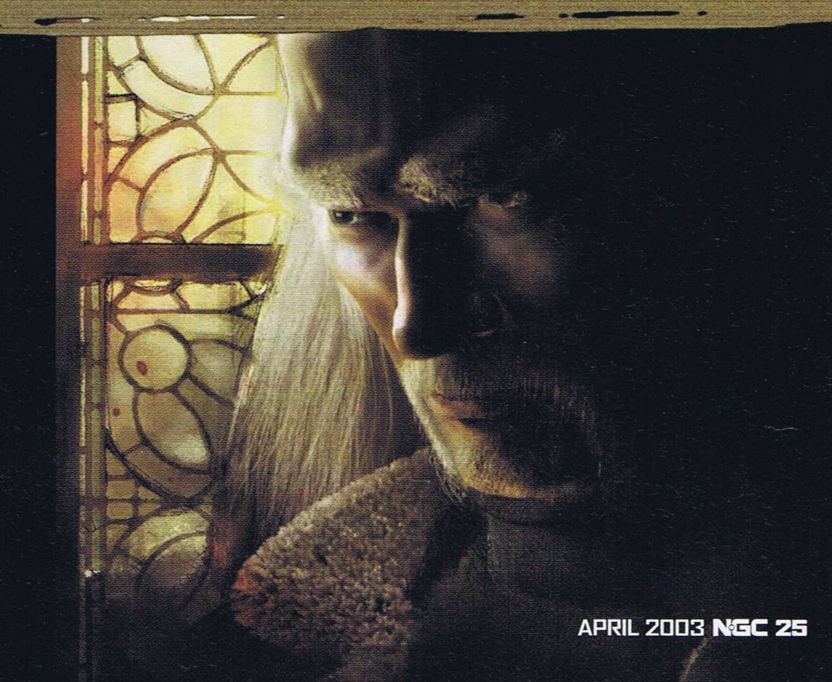


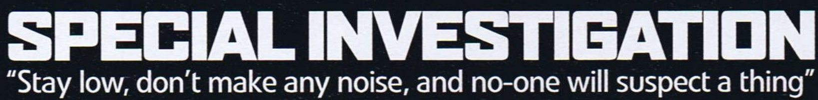
Pizza man's here! Walk quietly, and don't tread on the tortilla chips scattered all over the floor. Stealth is key and you aim to surprise him.

6



What do you mean, you don't like anchovies? I've walked down three flights of stairs to deliver this, you ungrateful sod!



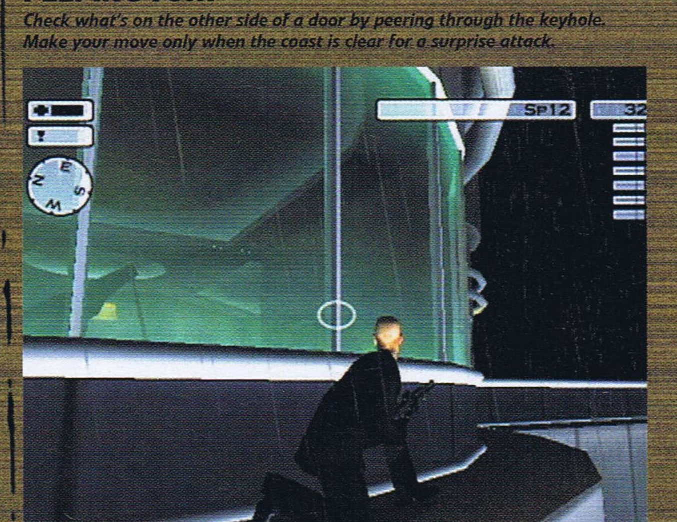


STEALTH SKILLS



PEEPING TOM
Check what's on the other side of a door by peering through the keyhole. Make your move only when the coast is clear for a surprise attack.

NIGHT VISION
This is perfect for finding your way through dark sewers and buildings after you've cut the power to the lights.



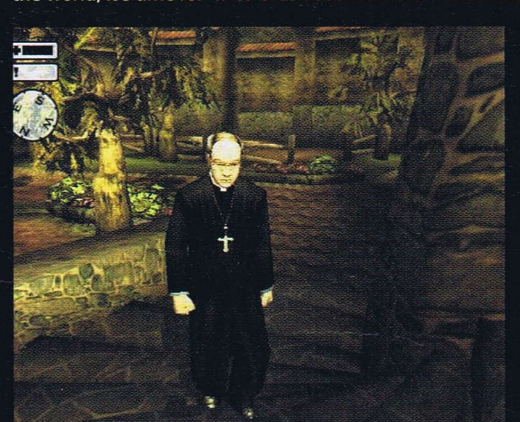


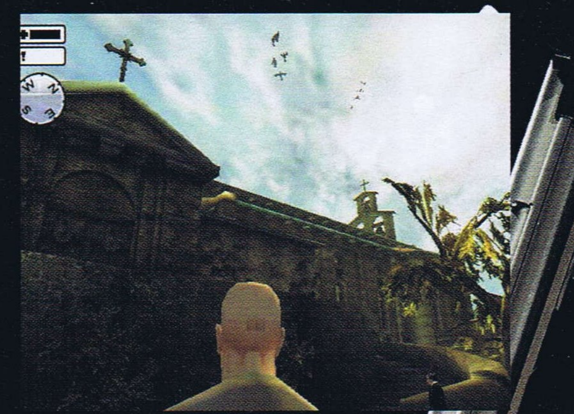
SNEAKING
Slow movement is stealthy movement. Stay low, don't make any noises, and nobody will suspect a thing. You will be a Silent Assassin...

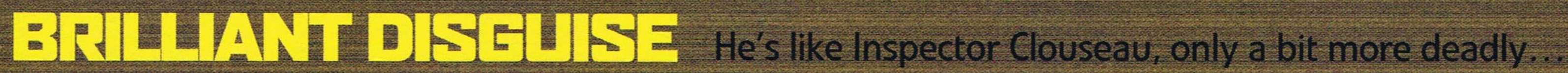
THE MAP
Call this up to check on patrol routes, but while you're staring at the map, you're vulnerable.

MAN OF THE CLOTH

Kindly Father Vittorio was the man who sheltered 47 and provided him with food and accommodation in the grounds of the church. When the good priest is abducted by bad guys and spirited away to some far-flung corner of the world, it's time for 47 to break out the black suit and do some serious killing (the usual fee applies, of course).

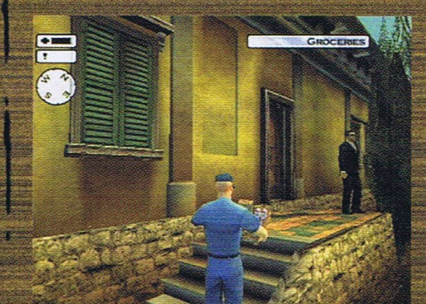






BRILLIANT DISGUISE

He's like Inspector Clouseau, only a bit more deadly...



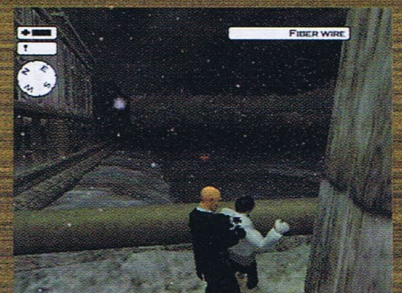
DELIVERY BOY

Shall I take this box of guns – I mean, groceries – up to the kitchen?



FIREMAN

Mean and moody in the heat-proof coat, but there's something about his axe-handling...



WAITER

Unauthorised fag break? Whip out the wire, steal his clothes, and dump him in the river.



SAINT

After wasting enough bad folk, Hitman gets a holy halo. Or is it the shotgun aiming reticle?

WHEN HITMEN GO BAD

The ideal assassination is a matter of one shot, one kill. But sometimes some civilian busybody raises the alarm or starts making a fuss for no good reason, and well... there are no penalties for spreading the love a bit further than your intended target. And the bodies never disappear, so you can arrange them in pretty patterns to relieve your stress.







always stand out. You can sometimes drag a body into a dark corner or drop them somewhere out of sight, such as the bottom of a river. Alternatively, you can administer a dose of anaesthetic, allowing a few minutes to complete the level before the victim wakes up and wonders where his clothes are.

With a large selection of real-world weapons, the path of ultraviolence is always open. Switching into the first-person camera view and playing the game as a plain shoot-'em-up can be satisfying after repeated failures at the stealth option. You can save the game up to seven times per mission, so a blunder doesn't mean you have to repeat the entire thing, as in the original *Hitman* on PC. The controls have been remapped from the PS2 version, taking into account the better analogue stick of the Gamecube's controller. The PS2 version had buttons for sneaking and running – now it's all done on the analogue. Switching between first- and third-person modes is done by tapping up on the D-pad and the slow-aim function has gone – the increased analogue sensitivity means it isn't necessary on Gamecube.

> **"WITH LOTS OF THINLY DISGUISED REAL-WORLD WEAPONS, THE PATH OF ULTRAVIOLENCE IS ALWAYS OPEN"**

Other than that, technical changes include a frame-rate that's locked at 30fps to eliminate slowdown, and superior alpha-channel effects (things like smoke). With a few weeks of development to go, the team at Io also hope to make use of various built-in special effects, such as anti-aliasing. Basically, the finished Gamecube version will be the nicest-looking Hitman of them all.

It's a really special game, and while we could happily talk about it all day, we don't want to give too much away for those of you who didn't catch it on a different format last year. Suffice to say, we'll be surprised if the Star Game logo doesn't get another outing when *Hitman 2* is released around May.

REVIEWS



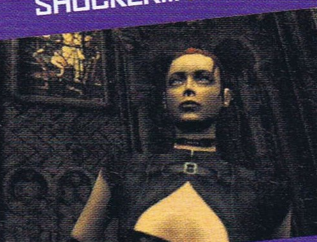
OUR PROMISE

Our reviewers are the most talented and knowledgeable Nintendo fans in the business. We don't only play games at work – we play them at home too, just like you. We ensure that we've played games through to the end so that we can give you a proper verdict – and one that saves you from wasting money.

IN REVIEWS THIS MONTH



DEFENDER
GOLDEN-OLDIE IN SHIINY 3D UPDATE SHOCKER... P48



BLOOD RAYNE
MARTIN'S FAVOURITE THINGS – VAMPIRES AND NAZIS. P52



WHAT IS PAL?

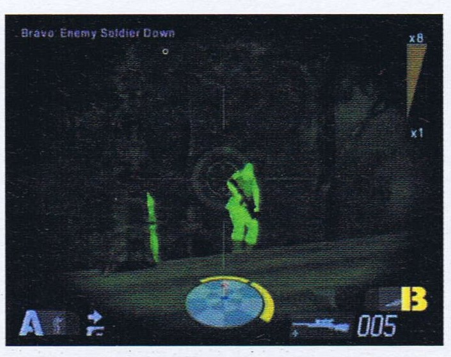
PAL is the UK's broadcasting standard. When you buy a Cube here it will be PAL. When you buy a Cube in the US or Japan it'll be NTSC – a different broadcasting standard, and the reason the two don't mix. Import games are NTSC games.



METROID PRIME

Finally, at long last, the best game on Gamecube gets a PAL release. Drink, dance and rejoice, children! P30

WARNING! SPOILERS AHOY! OUR REVIEWS CONTAIN SENSITIVE INFO!



GHOST RECON

Squad-based tactical shooting in the space-year 2008. So it's almost the future, but not quite. It's a bit like *Rainbow Six*, you know. Full of guns and things. P38



THE SIMS

The smash PC hit comes to Gamecube. But is it a faithful conversion or a ropey old port? These things happen y'know… P44

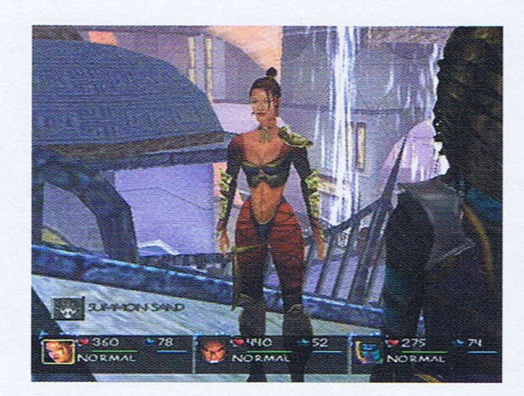


SONIC MEGA COLLECTION

Loads of old games for the price of one new one. A bargain in anyone's book (well, Geraint's). P54

HOW IT WORKS...

Our reviews are the biggest, most comprehensive on Planet Earth. We devote more pages to the games you want to know about, and give you more detail than anyone else. And in the new **NGC** things have just got a whole lot better: our Field of Play and Event-o-meter regulars will pinpoint exactly when and where games get good, and yet our verdicts remain the most honest and most stringent around.



SUMMONER

THQ's RPG waddles over to Gamecube, and fares none-too-badly at all, all things considered... **P50**



WINNING ELEVEN

The Japanese *Pro Evolution Soccer* reviewed! The best football game ever? Could just be... **P66**

1 GET INTO THE GAME

The quickest and smartest way to get started...



2 FIELD OF PLAY

The game's best bit taken apart and analysed...





3 EVENT-O-METER

The good bits, the bad bits – all in a handy graph...



4 THE SCORE BAR

The verdict explained for you...

PROS AND CONS
Because we think it's important to provide you with balanced reviews, we'll sum up the game simply with plus and minus points.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...
Not all games are good (unsurprisingly) – so you'll be wanting to know what the alternative is. We'll provide suggestions here.

VISUALS AND SOUNDS
Gamecube sends PS2 packing. Do the visuals and sounds show this?

MASTERY
How well does the game make use of the Cube's startling hardware?

LIFESPAN
Will it last you a lifetime or a couple of minutes? Here you'll find out for sure...

VERDICT
We don't throw scores around – we give a game what it deserves. Here you will find the definitive verdict on whether you should purchase a game.

+
- A veritable mine of info.
- A scheme for every eventuality.
- He's ticking over constantly – formulating, working, thinking...

–
- Rarely useful.
- Rarely sensible.
- Rarely of any use whatsoever. What a shame.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...
Pikmin
Nintendo
NGC/69 85%
Magnificent garden-based strategy. Devoid of sense talk.

8 VISUALS
Impressive to see: like a giant, organic, steam-driven jalopy-computer, sparking and alive.

5 SOUNDS
A measured, constant monotone, with a slight west country inflection.

8 MASTERY
A wild rush of invention, unfettered by convention or trifles like logic or practicality.

6 LIFESPAN
A million and one ideas, but sadly less than one per cent are of any use at all.

VERDICT
Sense Talk: The Giant Pulsating Brain From The Centre of Frome is unique and entertaining. You've got to try it at least once, even if it sounds like utter rubbish.

NGC 90

5 OUR SCORING SYSTEM

What those scores mean to you...

NGC STAR GAME

0-24	25-49	50-74	75-89	90+
Crushingly awful, massively dull. Rest assured, this is crud.	Disappointing, stashed with faults and likely to be short of any quality.	Some great bits, some not-so-great bits. Decent but definitely problems.	Great fun, brilliantly programmed at times, but probably flawed.	Rarely awarded, you'll know a 90+ is absolutely essential.

Mont. manipulator: Bickham

MEET THE NGC TEAM

Metroid's here! At last, UK folk can play it, and Team **NGC** rejoiced in their own ways.



JES
"As the **NGC** *overlord and taskmaster, I can merely hint at a smile before returning to flog my hapless employees."*



JUD
Jud spent all night "firing his irons" in celebration. Confusingly, this had nothing to do with domestic chores.



DAN
NGC*'S resident Irish stereotype drank Guinness, jigged and sang 'Danny Boy' in a maudlin manner. "To be sure", he added.*



MARTIN
Martin turned up to work bloodied and with an assortment of wicked blades. "I've killed someone," he explained helpfully.



GERAINT
Geraint is the most fertile man in Wales. He celebrated by writing our tips book. "Llanfairgogogog...", he wittered.





PAUL
NGC*'s Sense Talk™ expert predictably went surfing. Unfortunately, he choked to death on a massive turd.*



AL
Bickham Unit 2.0 highly enjoyed reviewing Metroid. "Almost as fun as scrumping", he said, mysteriously.



TIM
Our beloved ex-editor now cavorts with non-Nintendo consoles. "What's Metroid?", he said, dribbling uncontrollably.



TOM
Poor Mayo. Neither man nor beast, but somewhere inbetween, he was unable to articulate his feelings. "Graargh", he howled.

"It's the very epitome of what videogames should be about"



△ Freeze an enemy with your Thermal Visor on, and his heat signature will diminish to virtually nothing. Clever.



△ Come to Magmoor Caverns and risk its fiery wrath. Pack some extra Lynx, too – you'll sweat like a crook.



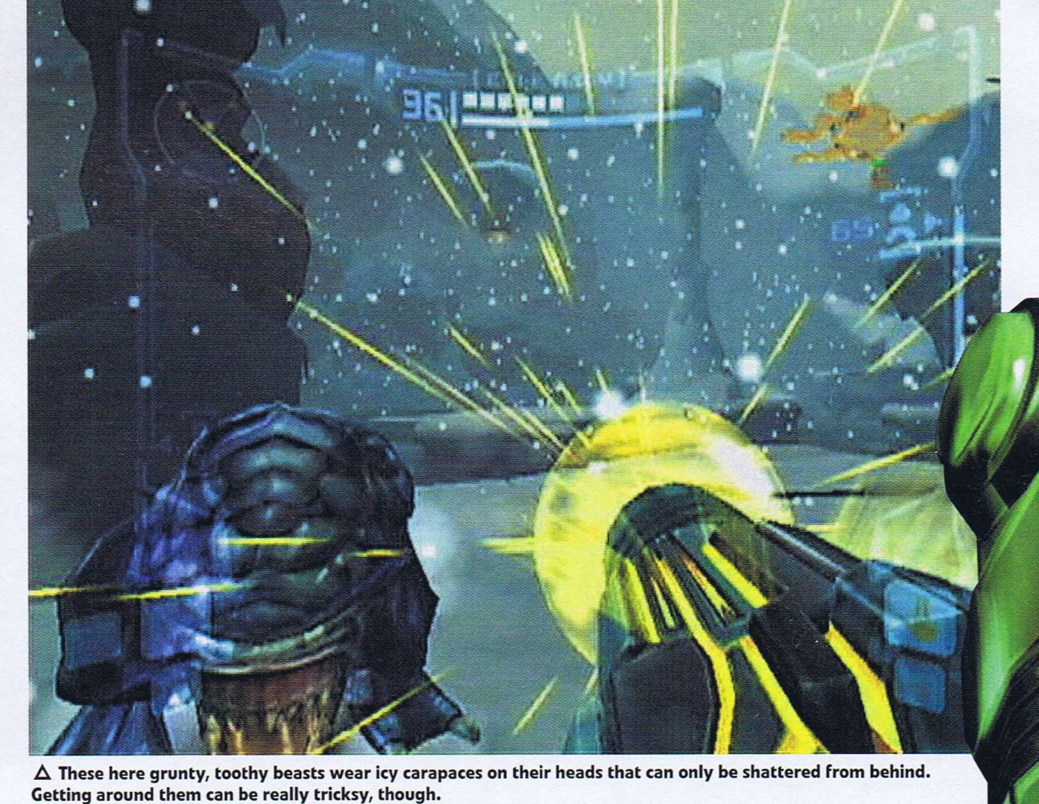
△ Deceased enemies kindly leave rocket and health refills behind when they kark it.



△ Exploding drones monkey around with your visor…



△ Stone Toads are impervious to most weapons. Let him swallow you, then drop a bomb in his colon. Heh.



△ These here grunty, toothy beasts wear icy carapaces on their heads that can only be shattered from behind. Getting around them can be really tricksy, though.

INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	RETRO STUDIOS
PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	1
GBA LINK-UP	YES
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	NO

WHEN'S IT OUT?
Not released here until the 21st March. It should, of course, have come out at Christmas…



COST: £40

METROID PRIME

NGC STAR GAME

So huge and addictive, it'll get you expelled, sacked, chucked or divorced… possibly all four. And it'll all have been worth it.

METROID PRIME

A girl with a gun and some bug-killing fun

MISSILES

Get as many of these as you can – when it comes to destruction and mayhem, you don't get much better. You'll also be screwed in the bigger boss battles without a healthy supply.

WEAPON OF CHOICE

Samus' arm cannon is actually four weapons in one handy, morphing Swiss-Army-knife affair. Each beam – Plasma, Ice, Power and Wave – has its own uses. Wave, for example, can be used to reactivate hidden power conduits. Also good for killing stuff, too.



BLIP BLEEP BLORK

Your heads-up display is the window to Samus' world. Scan everything you come across – you might find an enemy's weak spot or something of interest. Dots on the radar (top left) mean there are foes that want smacking somewhere nearby.



VISOR ADVICE

Your suit is kitted out with different visual aids in the form of visor functions – you begin with the Combat and Scanner visors, and pick up Thermal and X-ray abilities during the game. Varied and thorough use of them will ensure you don't miss anything important.

GET INTO THE GAME

First-person shooter, you say? *Metroid* rewrites all the FPS rules…

CONTROL CONFUSION

The main thing about Metroid Prime, which runs contrary to most modern first-person shooters, is that the control layout isn't quite what you're expecting. Strafing is achieved by holding down the L-button, which also functions as the auto-target button. Thus, if you've an enemy in your sights, holding down L will enable you to strafe left and right to dodge his shots while keeping your Arm Cannon trained on him. It's an unusual system, but then, it's an unusual game.



It's a bit mad really. Companies tend to push their big games out of the door at Christmas, cashing in on a time when buying stuff is almost a religious edict. So here we are now, in one of the 'dry' periods of the year, when games-sales are generally rather sluggish. Why has Nintendo chosen to release a game as big and important as *Metroid Prime* at such a time? There can only be one answer. They're confident that you'll buy it anyway, because it's so bloody good.

And you should, you know. Because it's *really bloody good.*

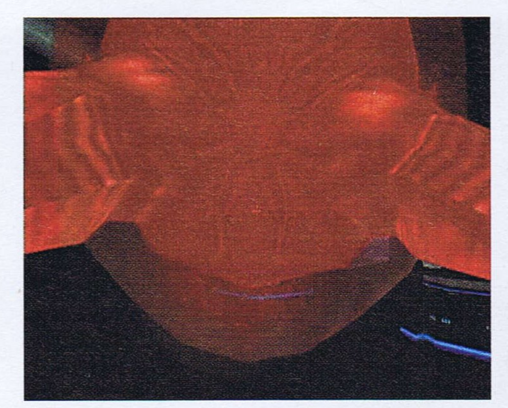
Thing is, there's nothing incredibly groundbreaking about *Metroid Prime*. It won't blow your socks across the room with mind-boggling new gameplay features. It won't shlup your eyeballs out of your head and twirl them around like a pair of squelchy castanets. It doesn't need to, because frankly, it's relentlessly pleasing, beautifully intelligent, and really rather big. There's no gimmickry; no blank cheques signed with good graphics and unpaid by poor gameplay. It's the very epitome of what videogames should be about. And it's never boring. Not once.

So, let's start with the basics. As Samus Aran, intergalactic bounty hunter, you alight on the planet Tallon IV. Once fecund, Tallon IV suffered a meteor strike which spread a hideously radioactive chemical over the planet, and now all life is either gone or has mutated into ornery (and invariably hungry) forms. The now-dead ruling race, a birdlike hippy-folk called the Chozo, prophesied that a saviour would come, and left certain devices in



DID YOU KNOW? In her first NES adventure, Samus Aran was hired by the Federation Police to investigate the rising numbers of Space Pirates, and to gather data on the Metroid organism.

"Will it enable me to shrink so I can access that tiny tunnel?"



△ The Metroid wants to kiss you. These evil molluscs suck the very life from your body. Through your FACE.



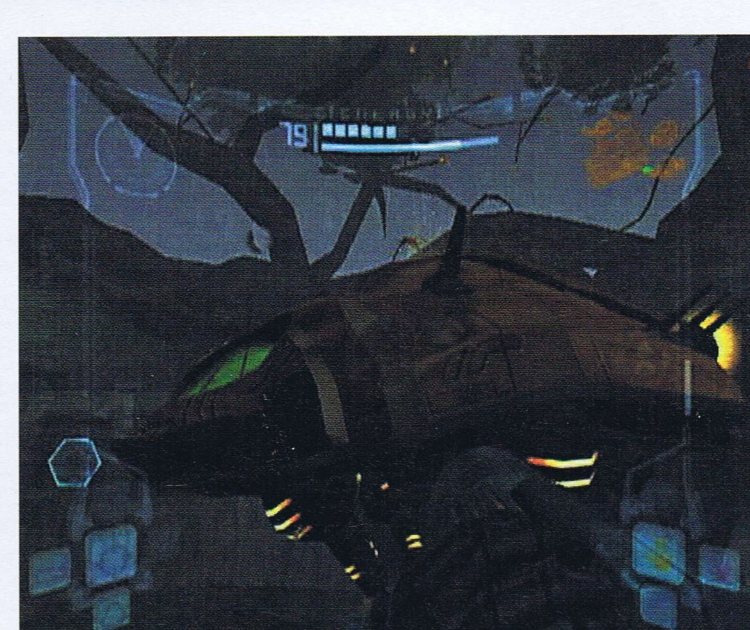
△ Platforms, stretching ever-upwards. There's lots of platforming in *Metroid Prime*, but it's never irksome.



△ The levels are totally distinct and unique. The Chozo Ruins, for example, is the only place where you get to see sunlight. Beautiful…



△ Morph Ball bombs can shatter brittle walls, such as those made of sandstone.



△ Samus' ship can be used as a save point – and rather conveniently, also happens to top up your rocket supplies and health.

place to help her on her quest.

The game kicks off on an orbital platform above Tallon IV – an outpost of the Space Pirates, who Samus faced in the original *Metroid*. This serves as a tutorial area, but as Samus' first port of call on her quest to wipe out the last remaining Pirates, it also sets the scene and gives you some idea of what's to come. It teaches you the basics in a really simple and clever way – for example, the first thing you get to grips with is how to use your scanner. It's a vital and fundamental gadget. Every time you enter a new room, corridor or area, you'll flip it down over your visor and look around. If you find an item that can be scanned for information, a little holographic icon overlay appears, and you hit the Scan button. This process performs various functions – opening doors, activating consoles, or simply giving you information about the object (or creature) you scan. It's also a great way of fleshing out the game into a story, as you use your scanner to read recent laboratory notes and decipher ancient Chozo texts.

DO THE SCAN

Indeed, the various ways in which you use the scanner are a symbol for how the whole game works. As you travel through the vast, labyrinthine areas of Tallon IV, you'll steadily collect new upgrades to your suit of armour, your visor and your weapons systems. But, just like the scanner, each upgrade is multi-functional. Take the Wave Beam upgrade for your arm cannon. It fires single or charged


△ Frozen enemies become brittle: a rocket in the face will shatter them spectacularly.


△ Some enemies can't be destroyed, such as these laser-scything eyeballs.




△ You'll begin to see more and more specialised Pirates as the game progresses.


△ Bombus are cheeky types, interfering with visors and homing in on your weapons.

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

Wouldn't be a Big Ninty Game™ without a lava level, would it?


Magmoor Caverns – where thermometers explode, and suit upgrades are sorely needed to protect you from the searing heat. Ice weapons are good here.


You initially land in the Tallon Overworld, but you'll come back and discover new areas as the game goes on. A good place to lamp weak baddies.


The icy wastes of the Phendrana Drifts contain some hideously tough beasties. These extreme environments obviously create tough evolutionary competition.


Tricky puzzles and tough-ass Space Pirates people the Phazon Mines. Your combat skills will need to be well up to scratch by the time you reach here.

bolts, which can be used in combat. As an electrical attack, it's particularly useful against mechanised units, such as sentry drones and power-suited Pirates, whom it can stun, immobilise and even send haywire.

But like all arm-cannon upgrades, this device opens specific colour-coded doors – the Ice Beam for white doors, Wave Beam for purple doors, and so on. In addition, the Wave Beam can be used to activate dormant electrical relays that lack their own source of power, enabling you to cycle locks and open sealed portals. And if you've got your mitts on the fabulous Thermal Visor, you'll be able to pinpoint these relays even in perfect darkness by their heat signature. While most games require you to match specific tools to specific tasks, *Metroid Prime* gives you what's essentially a big Swiss Army Knife. Each device offers massive functionality, enabling you to both shoot the bad guys and interact with the environment in an intelligent and fascinating way.

In this fashion, it's kind of similar to *Ocarina Of Time*. Indeed, environmental interaction is half of what *Metroid Prime* is all about. It's beautiful in the execution, and at any given point, your mind is constantly tinkering away with the problem of how to progress. The environment-centric puzzles never let up for a second. And progression through the game-world is the spur that keeps you galloping onwards. What's the next upgrade? What will it allow me to do? Will it enable me to shrink so I can access that tiny tunnel I saw earlier? Or blow through that weakened wall I scanned? But there's a wonderful linearity to the game that means you're never really left wandering around, wondering what to do next. Once you've attained an upgrade and worked out how to use it, you'll start thinking back to areas you passed earlier that you



GET BRENT!

Hah. Look at him, striding up and down, thinking he's the boss. But you'll show him… won't you? Each boss requires a unique approach, and this icy monster is impervious to standard weapons-fire. His only weakness is his soft underbelly. A job for some nice Morph Ball bombs, wethinks…

"ITS BEAUTIFUL IN THE EXECUTION – AT ANY GIVEN POINT, YOUR MIND IS CONSTANTLY TINKERING WITH THE PROBLEM OF HOW TO PROGRESS"

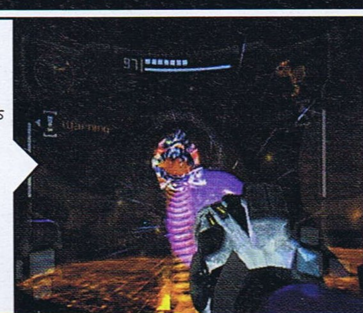
"You feel as though you've both out-fought and out-thought the enemy"

BOUNTY HUNTING

It's a dirty job, but someone's got to do it. Curiously, the Chozo (ancient race of bird-dudes who used to inhabit Tallon IV) had an inkling you'd be coming, so they left some guns and goodies lying around for you. You'll need 'em when the pap hits the fan…

COLD COMFORT

The Ice Beam upgrade helps you to perform various tasks, but turning enemies into blueberry Freeze Pops is its forte. It's dead useful in the lava-swept confines of the Magmoor Caverns, where beasts such as this fiery dragon fellow are vulnerable to its chilly powers. Freeze his noggin, then smash it to smithereens like a frozen walnut shell, with a well-placed rocket. Woo and yay!





BUG BLATTERING

Ickle beasties abound, but diminished size doesn't mean they're no threat; a few giant wasp stings later and you'll be hurting, even with that thick suit of yours. Later on in the game, though, you'll be able to simply morph into a ball and roll away at high speed from bugs such as this – earlier on, though, before you've the widgetry to avoid them, combat is your only option.

HERE BE PIRATES

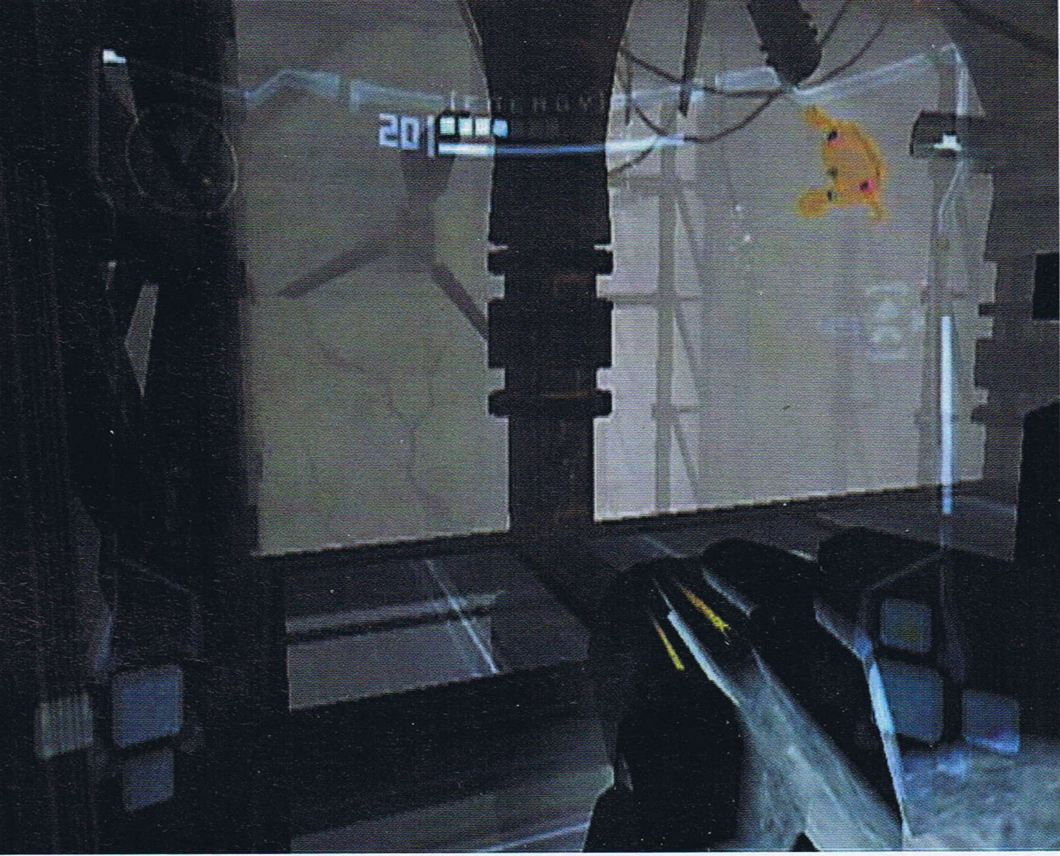
Your true nemeses, and the reason you're here. The Space Pirate comes in several interesting flavours. This is the cloaked variety, which can only be seen properly using the infra-red visor, as depicted here. They rather dislike blasts from your Ice Beam, and a couple of bolts will see them frozen solid, and at the mercy of your terrifying arsenal of weapons. "What mercy?", you cry…





SCANTASTIC

Nasty. The scanner usefully reveals the way different enemies attack. Wave Troopers (shown here) sport low-powered Wave Beams, rather like your own electrical discharge upgrade. Fortunately, they're also vulnerable to the same tech, and a few charged bolts (accomplished by holding the fire button down for a few seconds) will soon settle their piratical hash.



△ Spectral entities lurk among the shadows, and will scare you with their rattling chains if you give them half the chance. Foggy areas can conceal hordes of different types of enemies – time to crack out the Thermal Visor, and cut through the haze.



△ Colour-coded doors require a blast from the right weapon to open. Purple's the colour for the Wave Beam.



△ This horned fellow's weak spot is up his jacksie. Dole out a rocket enema, and he'll hose the place with neon arse-glop.

can apply that piece of kit to. And, incredibly, when enough time has passed and you haven't reached the next stage in the tale, the game tells you, in the form of incoming scan data, where to head next. A tap of Z brings up the fantastic 3D map interface, and the source of the data (power surges, seismic activity or distress beacons, for example) is highlighted as a location. All that remains is for you to work out how to get there, using your new toy and all your old ones. Here's why you never get bored. It's sublime.

GROSS COMBAT

But while mental application keeps your brain-lobes clicking and whirring, combat meets your more primal needs, and lets you paint Tallon IV with the delicate olive shades of alien bug-gunk. It's particularly gribbly when it splashes up on your visor, incidentally. The weapon effects are nothing short of spectacular, with incandescent contrails spiralling through the air, glassy ice-balls enveloping your foes (Ice Beam upgrade, natch), and screen-shaking explosions that set the joypad a-thundering and overload your infra-red visor. Such a treat for the eyes! In addition to the various elemental upgrades to your arm cannon, you also get a rocket launcher, which is ideal for taking out both fragile and fast-moving targets. A nice approach is to freeze an enemy with your Ice Beam, then frag him to shards with a rocket. Mmm, crunchy.

Every new creature type you meet requires you to rethink your tactics. Giant wasps may move quickly, but hold your auto-targeting button down, and you'll keep a bead on them; after a couple of blasts, they're toast. Jet-packing Pirates are another matter altogether, and you'll need to learn an entirely new approach which involves darting in and out of cover while you trade fire. Combat is the pumping heart of the game and, once again, scanning is vital:



SUITS YOU Samus' Varia suit is part of her body, fused to her flesh by the X-organism, once the primary food source for Metroids. For a superb Metroid history, check out www.geocities.com/dfloyd84/dnd/methist.html.

NGC FIELD OF PLAY

Meet new baddie… scan it… plan attack. it's a beeeootiful system!

POP-UP PIRATE

Waddahellzat? Some new kind of Space Pirate leaps into view, accompanied by two pals and some rather menacing music. Time to flip down the visor, and work out how to deal with 'em. They look a little… different to the other Pirates.

WAVE HELLO!

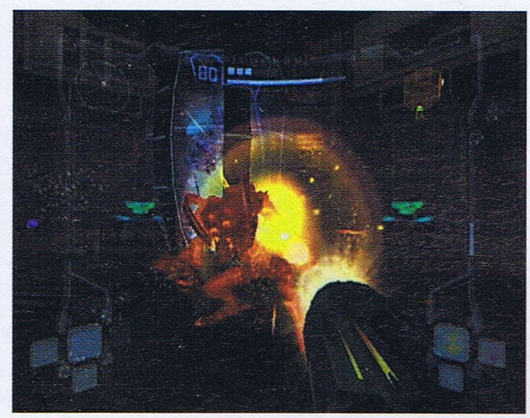
According to the scan, these boys pack Wave Beam weapons rather like your own. Fortunately, their power-suits are susceptible to your Wave Beam shots, which, while neat for us, is bad news for saucy Pirate types.

HIGH BOLTAGE

A charged bolt in the grinners puts paid to his antics – briefly. Electricity plays across his scrambled suit, stunning him for a moment. He'll need another couple of bolts before the message really starts to penetrate his brain, though.



△ The Power Bomb in action. Like a normal bomb, except much more powerful. Good for dynamiting Bendezium.



△ When you're up this close to a big baddie, getting a charged blast off is tricky, but will pay dividends.

every beastie has an Achilles' Heel, and your onboard systems do a fine job of locating it.

BISH BASH BOSS

But such engagements, while tricky, pale in comparison to the bosses. These gargantuan, hulking fiends demand intelligence, reflexes and tactical nous to topple. As an example, the first boss you face is a giant sentient plant. Your shots do little more than stun him, so you must work out how to damage the thing. Your scan reveals that he requires massive amounts of sunlight to stay active, so you look around and realise that there are four huge solar panels feeding him power. Blast away at them, and they'll fold away, leaving your quarry floppy and drained, like an under-watered tulip. Now's the time to dart in close and bomb his root system, while he's lying dormant. But of course, he has counter-attacks of his own, which you must learn to dodge; biding your time until you can blast away the next solar panel. Besting a boss invariably provides you with a new upgrade, and the sense of elation and reward you get from beating one is unrivalled. You feel like you've both out-thought *and* out-fought the enemy, and when you run off to play with your new toy, it's a feeling that can't be beat.

But it's the details that'll get you too. When you're standing too close to an explosion, the joypad goes rumble-potty, nearly leaping out of your hands, and you see a





THE LIE OF THE LAND

Tap Z, and the game pauses to show you the map screen. As you explore the levels, you may uncover map rooms, which allow you to download maps of the area into your systems. Otherwise, it's a case of uncovering 'em as you go.



BOSS BATTLE

With a sinking feeling, you enter a vast hall, and the widescreen bars close in… meaning you're in for a serious pounding now. Each boss battle is a terrific (and terrifying) encounter that involves learning entirely new ways to fight and dodge. Naturally, each has a pattern of attacks, and you'll often die a couple of times before you learn them all properly.



TOP GEAR

Your suit is the tool you use to interact with the world around with you. Slide into a Varia Suit today! We're sure you'll find it a comfy fit, madam. Just look at some of the neat things you can do with it…



MORPH BALL

Collect the Morph Ball upgrade and you can hit the afterburners to outrun enemies, or enter areas too small to admit a man-sized lifeform. Look out for teeny-tiny tunnels!



THERMAL VISOR

The Thermal Visor enables you to spot enemies before they spot you. Especially useful against cloaked Space Pirates, like this fellow here. I see yoooou!

WAVE BEAM

Slow-firing but pretty bloody powerful; that's the Wave Beam upgrade. It boosts the remit of your arm cannon to fire charged bolts of electrical energy. A real shocker.



ICE BEAM

Our friend and yours: the Ice Beam upgrade. This enables your arm cannon to transform enemies into popsicles for a spell. Follow up with a rocket to shatter 'em.

SCANNER

Your scanner tells you about the world around you, but it's also vital for activating certain consoles and switches in the game. This one deactivates a forcefield.




BEASTIES

Scan EVERY beast you meet. Not only will it tell you the weak points of tougher enemies, it gives you a fascinating insight into the flora and fauna of Tallon IV.



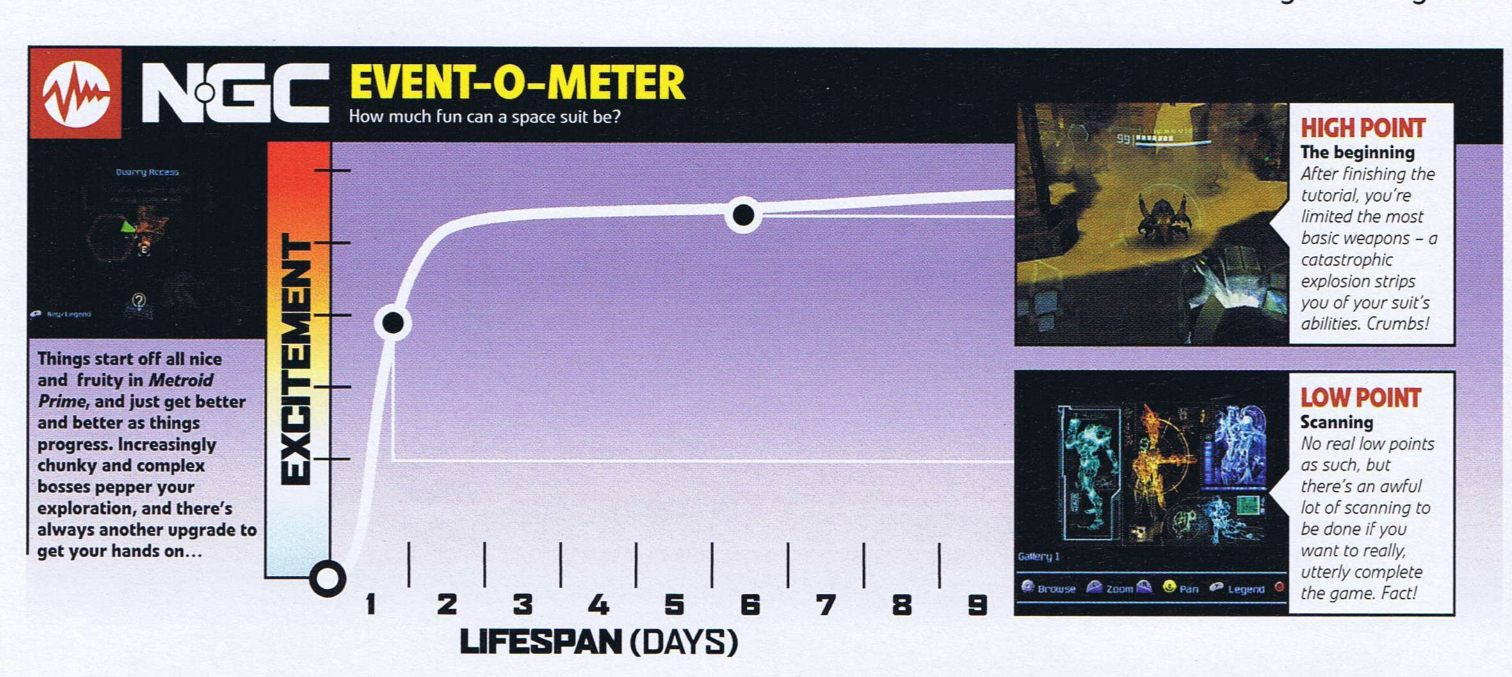
ROCKETS

Or missiles. What more do you need to say? They home in on targeted enemies, and can be fired in unstoppable salvos of five, as demonstrated here. Wargasmic!



MORPH BOMB

The Morph Bomb upgrade for the Morph Ball enables you to attack while in your spherical form. You can also use your own bomb concussions to reach higher platforms.





- Stylish and beautiful.
- Space-*Zelda* with guns!
- Relentlessly engaging.
- A real test of reflexes *and* intelligence.



- Long jaunts from one end to the other.
- Um.
- Nope, that's it.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…
Zelda: The Wind Waker
Nintendo
NGC/77 96%
Similar top Ninty puzzling, but cuter.



10 VISUALS
Nothing short of masterful, with some incredible effects.



SOUNDS
Hauntingly atmospheric, but a bit plinky plonky at times.



MASTERY
Crafted by true artisans for the most discerning of gamers.



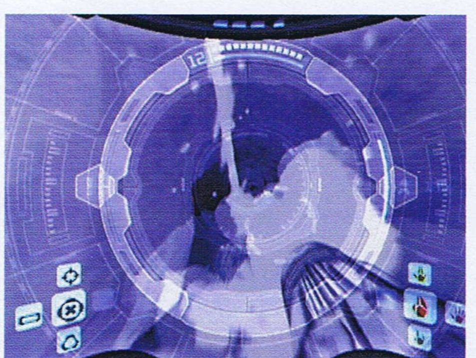
LIFESPAN
Whoops – where did the rest of 2003 go? Can't… stop… playing.

VERDICT

The ceiling of the Sistine chapel. Michelangelo's David. That nudey lass on the shell. See where we're going with this?









△ A pool of radioactive Phazon. Fancy a nice swim?



△ Pirates with jetpacks are dead tough, as they sport homing missiles. If they attack en masse, you're in for a fight…

reflection of Samus' eyes on the inside of your helmet. Various substances coat your visor, such as steam or sulphur gas. If you're hit by an electrical blast from an enemy's Wave Beam, your entire suit crackles, and Samus briefly raises her hand to protect herself. Perhaps most satisfying is the sheer level of control you have over the Morph Ball. This allows you to squish down into a little steel ball and roll through areas that would otherwise be too tight to enter. Top physics, too – gravity works against you uphill, speeds you downhill, and the analogue gives you a perfect level of control.

Of course, it wouldn't be a proper Ninty game without some Easter eggs, and *Metroid Prime* doesn't disappoint on this front. Alongside character art and development-sketch portfolios, you can unlock a different end-game movie called Cinema Metroidiso. But the best bit is the GBA connectivity that success earns you. Connect a GBA with a copy of *Metroid Fusion* inserted and you can play the original NES *Metroid* on your Gamecube.

Frankly, we're a bit gooey-eyed about *Metroid Prime* (which has nothing to do with the fine mist of bug-juice in the air). It's seamless from start to finish, and the mix of genres – first-person shooter, platformer, puzzler and more – sends tendrils of gaming pleasure into the deepest parts of your soul. It has elements you've seen before in all sorts of games, but never have they been baked together into such a lovely, meaty, spicy pie. For Retro Studios, it's a triumph of intelligence and hard work over the impulse to create games purely for profit. Of course, *Metroid Prime* will sell like hotcakes, and deserves to. But that's not because it's a big licence. It's not because *Metroid* is particularly fashionable. It's because this is an incredibly good game, perhaps *the best game on Gamecube* and, by default, one of the best games ever. Retro know what we want better than we do… and they've given it to us. History in the making, folks.

AL BICKHAM



FRACTURES
Every now and then, you'll come across a section of wall or other material that is weakened in some way. This is revealed through scanning, and with the right ammo thrown at it, it'll shatter to reveal a hidden tunnel or goodie.

"There are bumloads of controls for your hands to remember"

LAW AND ORDERS

Getting your men to a key point on the map is as simple as selecting them on the map screen, and telling them where to go on the tactical map with a single button press.

BANK ON IT

This mission requires you to liberate a bank under siege. The enemy has it covered from all angles, and the front door is murder. What will you do? It's times like this you'll feel glad you deployed two snipers for the mission.

STREETS OF RAGE

No sense in hanging around… especially on these bare streets. You'll often find enemy soldiers poking out of windows taking pot-shots at you as you head to your objective.



DEVELOPER	RED STORM
PUBLISHER	UBI SOFT
PLAYERS	1-2
MEMORY CARD PAGES	NO
GBA LINK-UP	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES

WHEN'S IT OUT?
Ghost Recon will be reconning its ghostly way to shops of games on the 21st March 2003.

COST: £40



TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON

Ghosts cast no shadows, and leave no trails. But that ectoplasm stuff plays mucky hell with their joypads.



GET INTO THE GAME

Get the hell off my goddamn obstacle, Private!

TRAINING MODE

While the training mode doesn't actually teach you anything about which controls do what, it does give you a grounding in all the basic weapon types. It'll also have you moving your lardy ass through assault courses to the strains of an R Lee Ermey-esque drill instructor, and test areas to get you into the swing of things. It's well worth doing the courses, but make sure you have your instruction manual open at the control section, especially when you come to command troops…





Not to put too fine a point on it, but when you begin playing *Ghost Recon*, you may just pop a vein or two in frustration. You'll want to eat your joypad, shout at the developers, punch the postie. And why would you want to do these things? Lazy development, that's why. The gamer's bane.

In the case of *Ghost Recon*, this is mostly down to the fact that it was originally a PC game. Somewhere along the esoteric pathways and convoluted corridors of the conversion process, an absolutely key feature has been missed out: the ability to check out what the controls are mid-mission. *Ghost Recon* is the kind of game where this is an absolute, hands-down, black-and-white necessity, as there are bumloads of controls for your hands to



LOCK AND LOAD

Carrying appropriate weapons for the job is essential, so before a mission, you'll want to kit your fellows out with some spiky old guns and stuff. However, the way you play is your call. If you like war at long-range, take more snipers; if assault's your thing, pack in the HMGs. S'up to you!

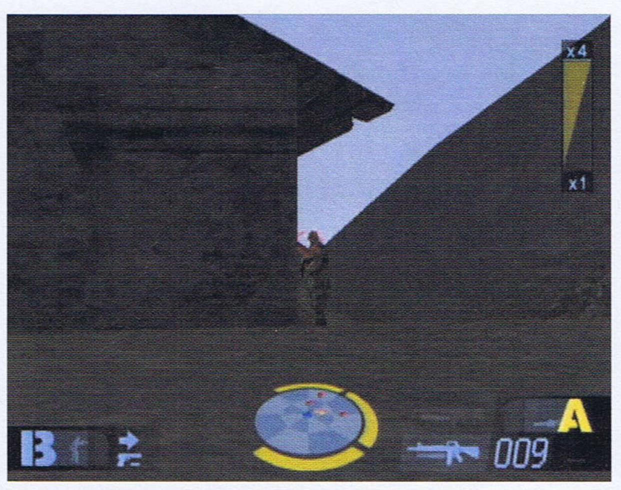
Spectral strategy from the dread hand of Clancy…



△ The spec-ops Carlos Castaneda strikes…



△ From a distance, this guy just disappears…



△ When it comes to close engagements, spray it, don't say it.



△ Bodies everywhere! The AI is pretty simple – too simple to take an obvious hint like this…



△ Get on your belly and crawl like a worm so the enemy won't spot you.



"YOU'LL WANT TO EAT YOUR JOYPAD, SHOUT AT THE DEVELOPERS, PUNCH THE POSTIE. WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO DO THIS? LAZY DEVELOPMENT…"

remember. Switching to your tactical map to send team-members to key locations; changing weapons; altering your combat stance – it's all a little bewildering at first. The ability to instantly check controls, and of course, the small matter of the inclusion of decent tutorials, are *really* important elements for a game like this.

TRAINING DELAYS

So, you pile into the training missions, and when the instructor says "activate your map button", you're required to pause the game and check the controls. Nothing in the in-game menu, mind, so you check the instruction book, where you find a tiddly, squint-inducing screenshot showing you the control menu. Why can't they just have the relevant button pop it up on screen? Because… the developers couldn't be arsed, clearly. And also, it would mean that they'd have to do new versions of the training sequences for each console conversion. Quid pro quo: lazy development.

Whew. You'll get over it, though. And when you do get to grips with the controls, the game really starts opening up. In essence, it's a squad-level shooter with stealth elements that gives you enough slack on the leash to go loco with the automatics once in a while. As such, it's not a bad old yarn. You're cast as commander of a special-ops unit in a fictional near-future Eastern European country, wracked by terrorism and the shadows of the Cold War. You'll face a series of missions that will require a little planning, and a measure of tactical awareness. In the single-player mode, you have two squads of three men under your command. You can switch between your six charges at any time, although scrolling through them to find the one you need is a real pain in the kipper. Imagine it in the middle of a firefight. Uh-huh. However, they can be selected by icons on the map

BROTHERS IN ARMS

Your buddies, while they make good cannon fodder, are also there to help you. Their AI isn't bad, but far from infallible – if left under fire for too long, they'll start dropping. The trick is to leave them in good, dug-in spots, surrounded with cover, with clear firing lines to the enemy positions.

"The sniper is perhaps the most useful unit in the game"

NGC FIELD OF PLAY

Awareness of your men's abilities is crucial. Let the battle-zone be your proving ground…

WAR AT LONG RANGE

Snipers are immensely useful, and used correctly, can take a lot of troops down. It's good to practice using them directly – that way, you can cover the advance of your men and pin down enemy units with fire from afar.

ROCKET MAN

Anti-tank weaponry is the only way to take out heavy armour. It's cumbersome and slow to reload, but without it, you're in a pickle when the tanks roll in. Waste of time against anything else, though.



ADVANCE!

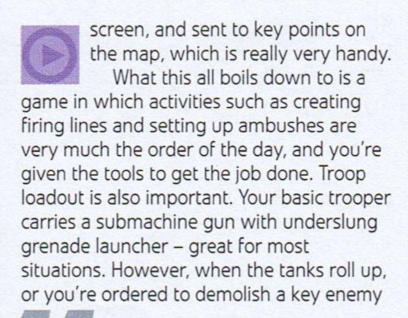
Every mission requires you to complete several objectives or more, so learning to advance safely (or quickly, depending on the circumstances) is vital. There are few occasions when running through open land is advisable. Usually, you'll look for the cover of tree lines, shrubbery and other obstacles to assist your silent advance.



△ To spank the tanks, you'll need big guns. Read your briefings, and pack accordingly.



△ If you're lucky, you can take over enemy outposts and employ their static MG-nests.



screen, and sent to key points on the map, which is really very handy.

What this all boils down to is a game in which activities such as creating firing lines and setting up ambushes are very much the order of the day, and you're given the tools to get the job done. Troop loadout is also important. Your basic trooper carries a submachine gun with underslung grenade launcher – great for most situations. However, when the tanks roll up, or you're ordered to demolish a key enemy structure, new toys are required, such as anti-tank rockets and C4 charges.

The sniper is perhaps the most useful unit in the game, for fairly obvious reasons. in addition to an accurate long-range rifle with a great zoom function, he's camouflaged up to the nips, so when he's motionless, he's pretty damn hard to spot. But one function that is common to all your units, and indeed, crucial to your survival in the field, is the ability to change your stance. Hit down on the D-pad, and your man will crouch to a

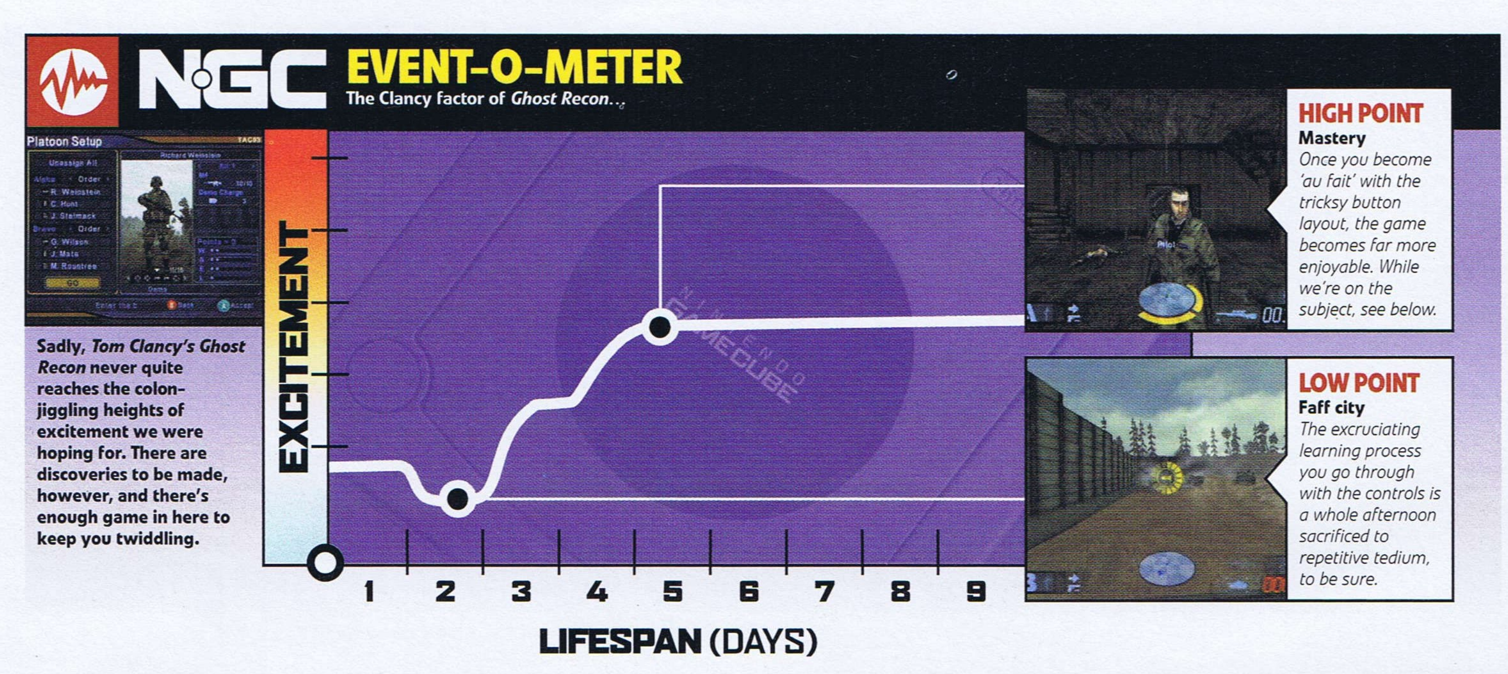
> **"CREATING FIRING LINES AND SETTING UP AMBUSHES ARE THE ORDER OF THE DAY. YOU'RE GIVEN THE TOOLS TO GET THE JOB DONE"**



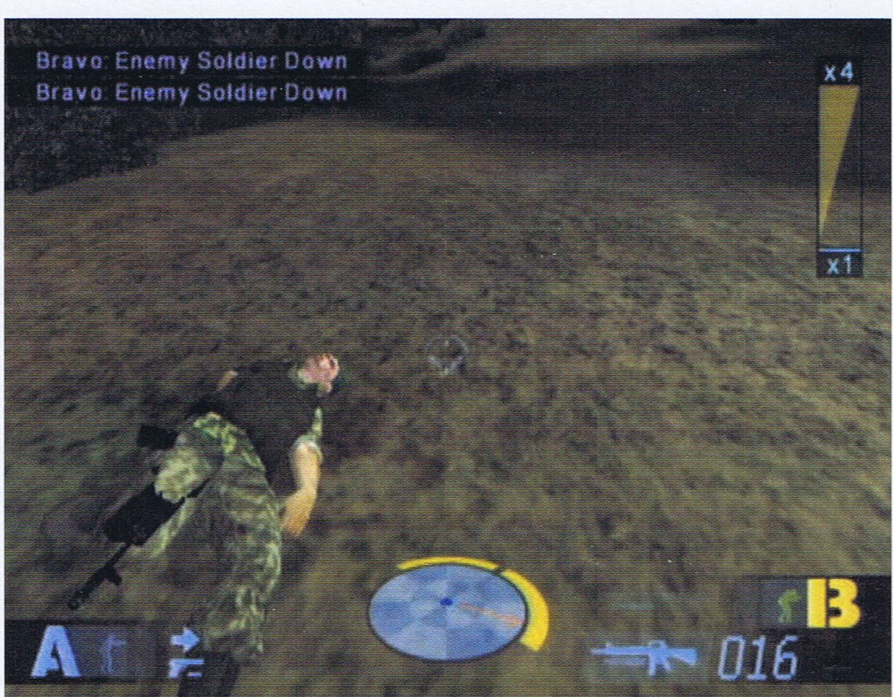
CLANCY SAYS! Erstwhile N64 gimp Mark 'Greener' Green once interviewed Tom Clancy for the now-defunct Arcade magazine. Clancy spent the whole time talking about himself in the third person…

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON

Spectral strategy from the dread hand of Clancy…



Sadly, *Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon* never quite reaches the colon-jiggling heights of excitement we were hoping for. There are discoveries to be made, however, and there's enough game in here to keep you twiddling.





△ Your teammates will let you know via radio when they've wasted enemy soldiers. It's vital feedback.







△ Grab that enemy machine gun, and mow the buggers down.

firing position. Hit down again, and he'll lie prone. This makes you much harder to hit and increases your accuracy. Hitting the deck is something you'll soon learn to do as a knee-jerk reaction when the bullets start flying. And after all, Johnny Terrorist throws himself to the floor under fire. Why leave him with the unfair advantage?

MISSION THE POINT

Alongside the campaign, you have training missions (largely useless for learning the controls, as we've discussed), tactical exercises, designed to get you used to different aspects of combat, and quick missions – basically, missions you've already cracked, laid open for replay. There's plenty to get your teeth into, and it has to be said, working co-operatively via the split-screen mode with another player is pretty good fun. Deathmatches are less so, as a mere couple of bullets will drop you like a bag of King Edward's.

But is it any fun? Well… yes. There's a lot of pleasure to be gained from taking the tactical approach, and setting up ambush-points for enemy columns, or approaching their positions on broad flanks, pinning them with fire, then finishing them off with rapid-fire assault weapons. But there are lots of little things which drag the experience down. For example, the graphics seem too indistinct; more reminiscent of the N64 at its height than a cutting-edge next-gen effort. Also, we encountered a bug where we somehow got stuck in the scenery, and found ourselves propelled into that disturbing universe between all the maths, populated by scary wibbling triangles and retina-searing flashes. Timmy! Don't go to the light…

In short, *Ghost Recon* doesn't feel like it's seen much in the way of Gamecube optimisation; the controls are a little fusty, lacking a decent sense of control in the sticks, and the map screen suffers from a similar fuzziness to the action itself. However, it's of mostly sound construction, and largely enjoyable, if not the sweat-soaked attention hoover we'd hoped for. A more generous budget in the conversion department, and *Ghost Recon* would've been a saucy special-ops cracker of a game. As it stands, it's perfectly adequate, and a generally better bet than week-night TV. But don't expect anything startling.

AL BICKHAM

TRACK MARKS

Tanks are an integral part of the game… and the enemy's not afraid to use them. they're devastating if you're caught in the open, and will merrily chew up both of your three-man squads in a jiffy. Working behind them with anti-tank weapons and unleashing hell against their thinner rear armour is the way to do it.



- Neat stealth-'n'-storm combination.
- Tactical challenges.
- Mostly satisfying.



- Not the best conversion we've seen.
- Indistinct visuals.
- The odd bug.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…

The Sum of All Fears
EA
NGC/76 25%
a Bedroom-coding disaster Clancy would probably rather forget.



6 VISUALS

A fuzzy appearance and blocky surroundings can only fail to impress.

7 SOUNDS

Adequate, and possibly 'realistic', but far from awe-inspiring.



5 MASTERY

Very poor use of the Gamecube's luvverly inside bits.



6 LIFESPAN

Keep an eye on the bargain bins in six months' time.

VERDICT

An enjoyable enough, solid enough, earnest tactical shooter. Brown visuals and a few control 'issues' round things off.



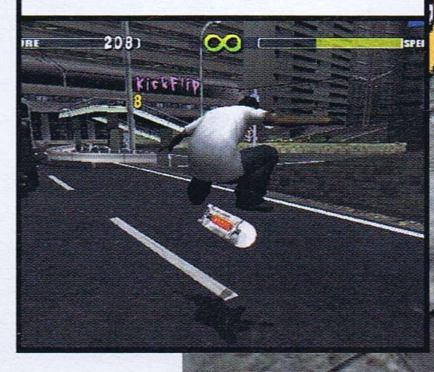


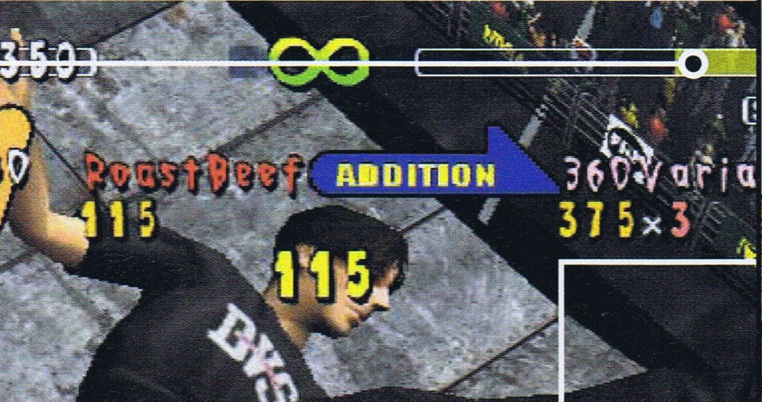


"Hit checkpoints, perform combos and deliver pizzas. Wacky!"

SPECIAL METER

Unlike Tony Hawk's, where your precious special meter vanishes when you crash, Evo's meter keeps building and building as you do tricks, up to a maximum of five bars. Double-tapping Z when you get big air performs a special trick, as does down/up and Z – these last two you can edit and name yourself.





CUSTOM BOARD

The boards are heavily customisable, and aside from the usual sponsors, you can write your own message on the bottom if you feel the need. Sadly, this is a pretty redundant gimmick sicne you almost never see the bottom of the board, even during replays.



CHARACTER

Interestingly, more and more edit features in the create-a-skater section of the game become unlocked as you progress, allowing for even greater customisation. If that isn't enough, you can (of course) unlock good ol' Solid Snake. You have to complete the game 100 per cent with all the default characters, though. Bah.



EVOLUTION SKATEBOARDING

INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	KONAMI
PUBLISHER	KONAMI
PLAYERS	1-2
MEMORY CARD PAGES	27
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO

WHEN'S IT OUT?
Japan and the States had the pleasure last year, but it's only been in UK shops since February.



COST: £40

The next step in gaming design, or a valiant-yet-doomed attempt to rival the master?

Any skate sim throwing its beanie into the ring has to be sure it can either beat Tony Hawk at his own game (difficult), or offer something new (hardly easy). *Evolution Skateboarding* has a bash at both, but such lofty ambition is not without risks…

The main USP (Unique Selling Point, marketing jargon fans) is the fact that Solid Snake is an unlockable character and the Plant level from *Metal Gear Solid 2* is the first playable area. A nice gimmick, but us thirsty, sweaty-palmed gamers demand more!

There are numerous similarities between *ES* and Tony's namesake. The basic button layout and commands are much the same; ollies, grabs, grinds and so on. There are a few diversions – you have to hold Y down to keep a manual going – but no real surprises. You can create your own skater, tinkering with your baggy trousers and radical vests if the need takes you, or choose from a number of established pros, as per usual.

Each area is unlocked by completing challenges from the previous area, usually hitting checkpoints, performing combos, and other more context-specific shenanigans, like delivering pizzas. Wacky!

The game engine is basically sound and it all looks great, but aside from the announcer who insists on telling you the name of all your tricks as you do them, it's that similarity with *TH4* that's its downfall.

> **"THE GAME ENGINE IS SOUND, AND IT LOOKS GREAT, BUT THE SIMILARITY TO TONY HAWK'S 4 IS ITS DOWNFALL"**

It's just slightly less intuitive, slightly less fun, the level designs don't flow as well as they should, and it doesn't provide a single, really good reason for buying it over, yep – *Tony Hawk's 4*.

TOM MAYO



- Unlock Solid Snake!
- Boss battles.
- Imitates the best.
- Play area from *MGS2*



- Too derivative.
- Annoying announcer.
- Flawed level design.
- *THPS4* is better



IF YOU LIKE THIS…
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4
Activision
NGC/75 85%
Undisputed skate sim heavyweight.



9 VISUALS
Excellent; smooth, detailed, and well animated.

6 SOUNDS
The usual skate-punk soundtrack, and that idiot announcer.



8 MASTERY
Comprehensive enough, until you compare it to the Hawkster…

8 LIFESPAN
Plenty of levels to play, goals to win, and tricks to design and learn.

VERDICT
A *THPS4* clone with some decent enough gimmicks. Playable enough, but still falls into the looming shadow of Mr Hawk.



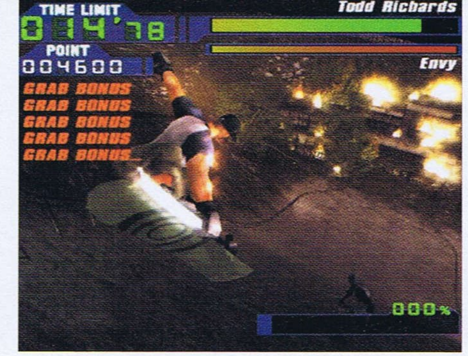




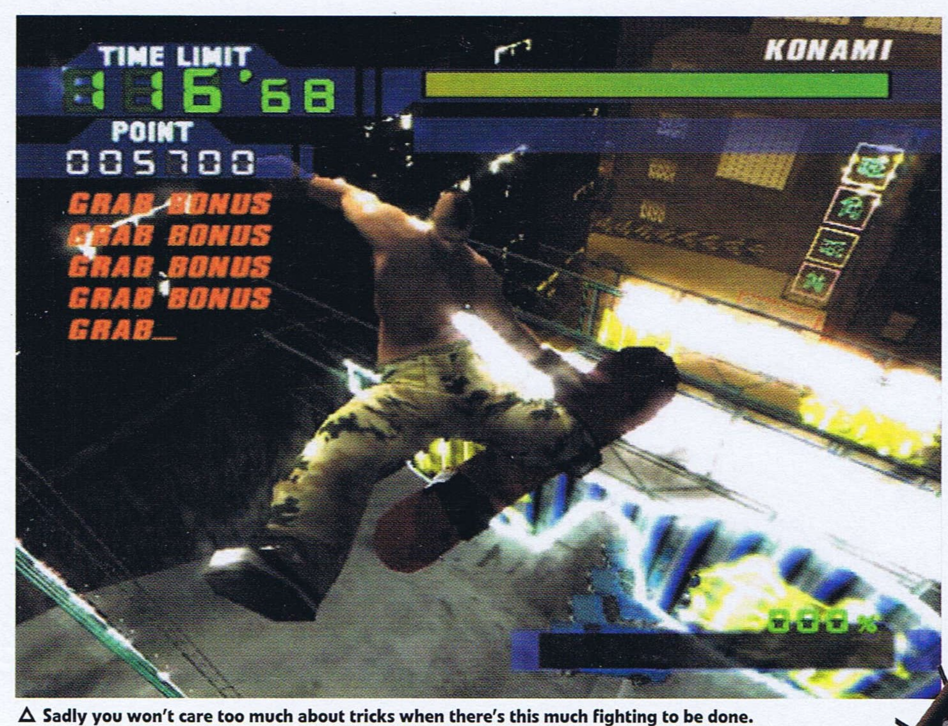
Shoddy snowboarding meets fun-free fighting



△ Missions can be based on beating a points target, finishing within a time limit, or hitting bad guys.



△ Land on somebody's head to make him explode in that 'awe-inspiring' puff of orange smoke.



△ Sadly you won't care too much about tricks when there's this much fighting to be done.



EVOLUTION SNOWBOARDING

INFO BURST

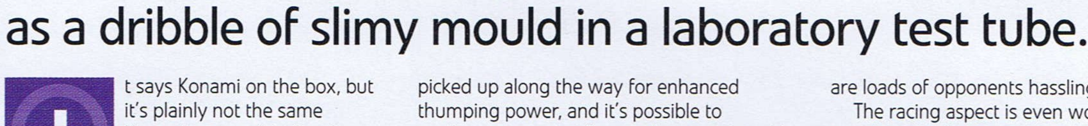
DEVELOPER	KONAMI
PUBLISHER	KONAMI
PLAYERS	1-2
MEMORY CARD PAGES	2
GBA LINK-UP	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES

WHEN'S IT OUT?
This is out now, should you have more money than sense, and a masochistic streak.

COST: £40

Don't let the title fool you. This is about as evolved as a dribble of slimy mould in a laboratory test tube.

It says Konami on the box, but it's plainly not the same Konami responsible for the rather magnificent *Winning Eleven* (see page 66). This woeful combination of snowboarding and scrapping misses the mark by a huge distance, and is as poor a racing game as it is a beat-'em-up.



The aim is to batter various bad guys while sliding down the piste, like a winter sports version of *Road Rash*. Weapons such as spiky sticks and bicycle chains can be picked up along the way for enhanced thumping power, and it's possible to perform stunts that fry nearby enemies with a burst of electricity. Bosses crop up every few levels, and the courses become bigger and more riddled with things to smash.

The problem is that it's virtually no fun to play. The fighting is totally weak – just hit the punch and kick buttons, and watch as the enemies vanish with a truly pathetic explosion effect. Your character can only hit in the direction he's facing, and spinning him around is a frustrating task when there are loads of opponents hassling him.

The racing aspect is even worse – there's simply no challenge to it, as the courses are mostly just wide, open slopes. The board handles terribly, so it's just as well there aren't too many sections that require precision control.

It's monumentally dull, and there's every chance you won't have the willpower to press restart if you get tonked by the first boss. Games are supposed to be entertaining, not punishing, and this one fails to deliver anything that could make us recommend it, certainly not at £40 a pop.

SSX Tricky is much better. Even *Dark Summit* is better. In fact, spending your money on a bumper pack of ice-cold meths and falling unconscious in a gutter may well be more enjoyable than this.

GERAINT EVANS



- Moves smoothly, without much slowdown.
- It's different.



- Tedious levels.
- Poor handling.
- Feeble fighting.
- Evil music.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...
SSX Tricky
EA
NGC/69 87%
Decent snowboarding with tricks and no crappy fighting.



4 VISUALS
Plain and textureless. Looks like an N64 game with a higher res.

3 SOUNDS
Nasty thrash tunes that will have you reaching for the mute button.

2 MASTERY
Shows an impressive mastery of the dark art of crapness.

2 LIFESPAN
Give it an hour, tops, and you'll be as bored as bored could be.

VERDICT
A complete non-event of a snowboard game, mixed with the kind of useless beat-'em-up that should have been banned back in 1982.







MAD LENNIS

He's useless, and can barely do anything for himself. If you don't keep him happy, he'll cry. If you don't sleep he'll keel over, and if he doesn't wake up in time for work, he'll get fired. With no money, the bailiffs will come round and zap away your sofa.



YOUR HOUSE

It'll start off as a right old dive. You'll need to make sure you keep going to work with a decent level of energy and happiness. Keep it up and you'll get promoted – giving you more cash to waste on even more nasty-looking furniture. And beer coolers… and hot tubs…



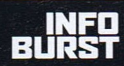
THE LADIES

Hug her, cheer her up and compliment her. Give her enough attention and feed her enough burgers and before you know it, she'll be washing up and bringing cakes round your house five minutes after you phone her. Proper service, that.



FILTH

Look at the state of this place! You need to make sure you wash the dishes, and clean any toilet and carpets you might have urinated on. If your hygiene levels go down, no-one – not even your own mother – will so much as look at you. You stinking pig.

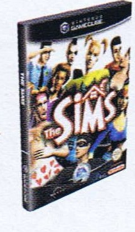


INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	MAXIS
PUBLISHER	EA
PLAYERS	1-2
MEMORY CARD PAGES	27
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO

WHEN'S IT OUT?
Out on the 25th of March in the US. But you won't get to torture the little people here until April.

COST: £40



THE SIMS

For such little people, they can cause big problems…

It's a curious one, *The Sims*. This PC to console conversion does – in some ways – have a passing resemblance to *Animal Crossing*. It's basically a life sim in which you can decorate your house, form friendships with those around you and generally indulge in a similar dolls'-house experience.

That's where the similarity ends though. *The Sims* has far more depth to it. You take control of either a single character or a whole family, and take charge of their daily lives. That includes everything from eating meals, washing, exercising, working, sleeping, watching TV and even urinating.

Initially, it's a daunting task babysitting your initiative-lacking minions. Our character, Mad Lennis, spent most of his first few hours soiling himself and battling narcolepsy merely because we forgot to tell him to go to the toilet. Or sleep. A few more hours in, though, and things were looking up. Lennis had managed to move out of his mother's house, was eating properly, getting some sleep and making his first tentative steps into the world of romance with his new friend 'Pauline'.

> **"OUR SIM SPENT MOST OF HIS FIRST FEW HOURS SOILING HIMSELF AND BATTLING ACUTE NARCOLEPSY"**

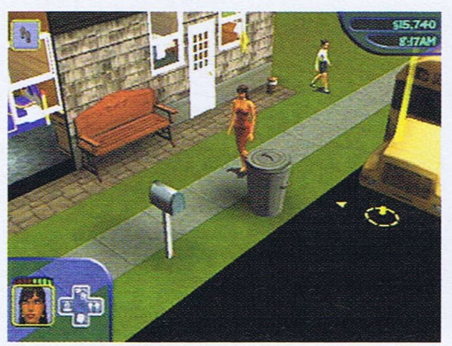
It all amounts to a rather surreal experience, and you find yourself being drawn into the most



In attempting to leave home, you have to convince your mother you can cook. This kitchen fire won't help.







Pack the kids off to school then sell their beds.



Sadly, the women won't watch you take a dump.

THE SIMS

Modern life is rubbish. Fancy some on the Cube?

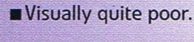


- Hours of gameplay.
- Strangely addictive.
- Nice and involving.
- Loads to discover.



- Cumbersome control.
- Very slow moving.
- Sometimes tedious.
- Visually quite poor.





IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Animal Crossing
Nintendo
NGC/74 90%
Another compelling, slow-moving life sim.





6 VISUALS

An old PC game and it looks like it too. More detail would be nice.



5 SOUNDS

Jibber-jabbering, functional spot-samples and forgettable tunes.



6 MASTERY

There's a great deal in here, but it looks dull, with some slow-down.

8 LIFESPAN

You could keep going for over a year if you really wanted to.

VERDICT

A strange game that sucks you in for hours on end. If you can be patient with the shortcomings it will certainly grow on you.





DISGRACE

Starting life in The Sims can be a tricky process. You'll need to read up on your cookery skills to make sure you don't start a kitchen fire. If you fail to get enough sleep you'll keel over on the spot, oversleep and lose your job. Failure to get to the bog on time can also lead to some serious embarrassment.





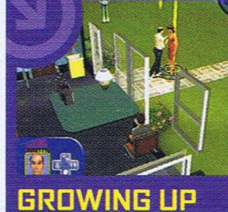
mundane affairs of your Sims. It bothers you when they wet themselves in front of prospective dinner dates. You start caring about matching furniture. You chastise yourself for repeatedly failing to get them to work on time. You spend ages getting the Feng Shui just right, and you lovingly monitor your energy and hygiene levels as though your own life depended on it.

A DESIGN FOR LIFE

The Sims is essentially broken down into two modes: a free-form game where you can do what you want – say, drive your Sims insane if it takes your fancy – and an objective-led mode. You take charge of a single Sim's life, and progress through pre-designed houses, improving its job prospects and social life, and making sure it tidies up after itself. Good fun, yet also very frustrating. Much of your day is taken up waiting for Sims to wake up or come back from work, although at least it gives you the opportunity to mess about with the house itself without your Sim getting in the way. Put some new wallpaper up; install extra fixtures and fittings from the exhaustive list; or just move the entire house ten feet to the left if you're feeling evil. A normal Sim barely has enough hours to eat a meal, unblock the toilet and chat to other Sims before it's bedtime, bathtime or worktime. Even though you can speed up time, things can and do drag, especially when it involves bowel movements or endless moaning.

Getting anywhere in *The Sims* is going to take a great deal of patience. Not necessarily a bad thing if you're after something of a slow-burner to while away the hours, but anyone looking for a quick fix probably won't find it here. Still, there's a great deal to like. It's humourous, addictive, and there's enough depth and variation to ensure you'll be hooked for months.

GERAINT EVANS



GROWING UP

Striking the balance between hard work, fun and a healthy social and love life will see your squalid little hole expand into a home fit for a king and growing family. It'll take a while though…

Are you primed and ready?



METROID PRIME



"Worth buying a GameCube for alone."
GAMES™ 10/10

"Metroid Prime is simply a fabulous gaming experience and the best game on the Cube."
GAMESMASTER 96%

"The best game on GameCube, and a title that stands among the world's finest ever."
NGC 96/100

"Metroid Prime is an astoundingly addictive, super-polished, sci-fi masterpiece."
CVG 9/10


Plasma Beam


Missile Launcher


Combat Visor

Coming 21st March



"Fulfils its space-shooting duties well enough"



△ Just like the original, the tricksy red mutants are almost impossible to shoot down. They're far less menacing than the scary 2D ones in the original, though.



△ Spruce up your ship with natty extras (providing you've earned enough credits).



△ In addition to the classic *Defender* craft, there are also five other vessels to unlock.



△ Ferrying missile batteries around gives the game a whiff of strategic gameplay. You can lug equipment around on your wingtips, as well as colonists.



△ Save helpless colonists as they fall to potential doom from the evil alien spaceships – just like the original, except now it's in crazy 3D. Mad!



INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	7 STUDIOS
PUBLISHER	MIDWAY
PLAYERS	1-2
MEMORY CARD PAGES	2
GBA LINK-UP	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO

WHEN'S IT OUT?
Defender is out on the 14th March – the superior original's been in arcades since 1981…



COST: £40

DEFENDER

Midway leave no coin-op stone unturned as yet another arcade ace gets a next-gen overhaul…

Originally unleashed way back in 1981, *Defender*, together with the likes of *Scramble*, *Galaxian* and *Pac-Man*, formed part of an arcade axis of coin-op invaders that first put videogames on the map.

Dragged from its Rip Van Winkle-like slumber, this classic coin-op now makes its return after an absence of some 20 years. The most obvious difference between this and the original is that nowadays *Defender* runs in full 3D (natch). Apart from this admittedly major departure, however, the central core of the game remains exactly the same. In a plot that more than tips a wink in Starship Troopers' direction, alien 'bugs' have invaded human territories and it's up to you to crush the life out these insectoid hordes. As well as destroying enemy craft, you'll also need to pluck settlers from the surface of each planet you visit. Failure to get to them before the bugs means peaceful Joe Colonist is transformed into a twisted mutant just gagging for human blood. Far from merely being a 21st-century mirror of the original, though, this version chucks in a handful of new game elements. On most missions your priority is not only to rescue the colonists, but also to defend their base from attack. To make matters slightly easier, the game lets you scatter ground-based missile batteries anywhere you fancy, lending the proceedings a vague strategy element. However you decide to play things, though, you'll need to make sure both the colonists and the base survive, otherwise its game over for you, sonny-boy.

While this remake may manage to capture the manic nature of the original and repackage it 21st-century style, *Defender* is extremely unlikely to win any awards in the visual, sound or gameplay departments. While the game fulfils its space-shooting duties well enough, there's absolutely nothing here that raises the stakes beyond the stunningly average. Add to that the stunted nature of the single-player game – just ten short levels that can be easily completed in a day – and there seems little point in forking out for this nostalgia trip.

> "THERE'S ABSOLUTELY NOTHING HERE THAT RAISES THE STAKES BEYOND THE STUNNINGLY AVERAGE"

RICH OWEN

+

- Repackaged in full three dimensions!
- Frantic and fast paced.
- Well-scripted dialogue.



- Repetitive action.
- Awful dialogue clipping.
- Complete single-player in a single day.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…
Star Wars: Rogue Leader
Activision
NGC/68 87%
How a space shooter should be made.



6 VISUALS
Okay animations, decent FX and a solid frame-rate throughout.



5 SOUNDS
Loads of tunes and speech, but ruined by terrible clipping.

5 MASTERY
Seemingly made with the developers sticking on autopilot.



4 LIFESPAN
Two-player action, but a main game you can finish in a day. Bad.

VERDICT
Does an average job of translating the original *Defender* into 3D, but this is still light years beyond its sell-by date.

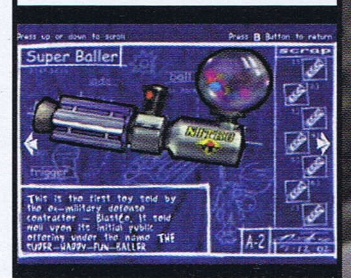






POWERED-UP
Most enemies will drop health pick-ups and other valuable items after a taste of the prof's Splizz Gun. You heard: Splizz Gun.

BLUE LOON
The mad professor can upgrade his standard equipment by stumbling across blueprints and then collecting enough of the requisite spare parts.



ENEMY MINE
Most enemies can be dispatched with a blast from the Doctor's Splizz Gun. However if you stun them first, Muto can extract their DNA and use it in his shape-shifting experiments.

TRANSSS… MUTE!
Once he's acquired enough DNA the nutty professor can transform himself into one of six different creatures, allowing him to swim, fly, crawl up walls, smash enemies with his fists, and scurry down small holes.

INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	MIDWAY
PUBLISHER	MIDWAY
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	6
GBA LINK-UP	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO

WHEN'S IT OUT?
The nutty professor will be hitting the old shelves of shops of games on the 7th March. March!



COST: £40

DR MUTO

Mad science, crazy inventions and shape-shifting… why has no-one come up with this formula before?



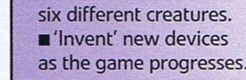
Though he may bear more than just a passing resemblance to the Fast Show's office joker, this mad professor is the genuine article. After a botched attempt to tap into a new source of energy inadvertently reduces his homeworld to rubble, the good doctor decides to try and rebuild it with yet more hare-brained schemes. Aiding and abetting the crack-pot scientist in his quest is his lumbering sidekick Janky and sentient supercomputer AI, who doles out useful information in a monotone drone.

What sets this apart from more conventional platformers is the sheer amount of strange devices you can 'invent' over the course of the game. The deranged doctor can extract DNA from the various creatures he encounters on each of the game's four planets. Using this biological information, Dr Muto gains the ability to morph into either a mouse, a spider, a gorilla, a fish, a fly or a pterodactyl, each form lending the doctor the appropriate set of abilities. In addition to acquiring these metamorphic skills, the good doctor picks up blueprints, digs up new isotopes and stumbles across spare parts as he treks through the game. Combining these, he's able to create all kinds of useful devices. Some are used in the game itself, such as the pocket rocket or invisibility device, while others play an essential part in the storyline.

> "WHAT SETS THIS APART FROM OTHER PLATFORMERS IS THE AMOUNT OF STRANGE DEVICES YOU CAN 'INVENT'"

While Dr Muto isn't going to give Mario a run for his money, the enhancements and transformations the doctor utilises throughout the game give this platformer an interesting and inventive hook. Add to that the doctor himself, a genuinely likeable character in the Emmett Brown mould, and the result is an entertaining experience. Midway haven't exactly reinvented the platformer, but they've definitely come up with an interesting new formula.

RICH OWEN



+
- Transform into one of six different creatures.
- 'Invent' new devices as the game progresses.

–
- Industry-standard level design.
- Only four worlds.
- Sluggish camera.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…
Super Mario Sunshine
Nintendo
NGC/73 96%
Platforming perfection.



7 VISUALS
Brilliant transformations and plenty of weird aliens to say hi to.

7 SOUNDS
Reasonable tunes plus loads of genuinely amusing speech.

6 MASTERY
Some great flashes of invention, but plenty we've seen before, too.

7 LIFESPAN
You won't rattle through this in less than 15 hours.

VERDICT
Brilliantly inventive at times and bog-standard at others. Still, more than enough to make this worth investigating.





One of the few occasions in *Summoner* where you aren't thwacking something or other.

The amount of dialogue for you to read is extensive – but for the most part it's all rather nicely written.

You can swap between your characters at any time. This fishy-looking lass is an aquatic assassin, originally hired to kill you.

SUMMONER A GODDESS REBORN

The Gamecube's first proper RPG arrives, and it's something of an ugly duckling…

INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	CRANKY PANTS
PUBLISHER	THQ
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	19
GBA LINK-UP	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO

WHEN'S IT OUT?
This game will be out on the 21st of March. Probably about now, then…

COST: £50

What a turnaround. Last month when we played the preview code, this game was so bad no-one in the office wanted to touch it with a barge pole. Thankfully, it's improved a great deal – but you wouldn't think it at first glance.

The game opens aboard a ship, where you, as Maia, Queen of Halazaar, are thrown into a battle with boarding pirates. This is the tutorial, and to be honest, it's utter rubbish. The controls are slack, the camera's abysmal, and the menu system is unwieldy – it looks for all the world like a high-res N64 game. All very disheartening. Much as with the preview version, we were on the verge of simply giving up.

By the time you get off the boat and embark on your first quest on land, things do improve, for reasons that are rather intangible. First of all, the combat, as repetitive as it is, is all in real-time. Your character has a three-hit combo, an evasion-jump and a blocking manoeuvre, so rather than boring turn-based battling, you have to attack, block and counter-attack on your own. During the course of the game, you pick up two companions to help with the monster-bashing – you can either control them yourself, or assign different AI routines for them to stick to. It's certainly refreshing, and adds a rather pleasant action element to all the exploration.

Summoner's biggest strength, however, is the atmosphere. Granted, the amount of mythological hokum can be a little grating,

SUMMONER: A GODDESS REBORN

Ruler. Warrior. Goddess!



△ Visually, it all resembles a higher-res N64 game – it really is pretty nasty in places. Like *Aidyn Chronicles* after a shoe-shine…



△ …some of the game's main locations are pretty impressive, through. What they lack in detail they make up for in size.



△ Combat, although dealt with in real-time, is frustrating. It's easy to get stuck in corners, or be battling foes you can't see due to the rancid camera system. Still, you've gotta love those floating numbers…

WELCOME TO YOUR WORLD

It's huge, and you'll be required to prove your worth as queen at every turn…



YOUR KINGDOM

It's huge, as are the adjacent kingdoms. Each location is a sprawling land mass for you to explore and battle in.



COURT AND PETITIONERS

You'll need to tend to your people's needs. Courtiers need money for projects and petitioners need your counsel.



LEADING IN BATTLE

You have an army, but you prefer to do things yourself (with a little help from some mates). Let the button-mashing commence.



HELPING HAND

People need your help. Whether it's catching monkeys or being freed from prison, the reward is always worthwhile.

but you'll quickly start to empathise with the characters you meet. In your palace, for example, you sit and give audience to petitioners, solving disputes like Sean Connery in The Man Who Would Be King, and making decisions on events taking place in your kingdom. You give cash to your ministers for trade, or to fund academies, and on your return you find out how things have developed. Make your decisions wisely and you'll receive massive increases in EXP.

GOING WALKABOUT

When you're out questing, you can also free prisoners, battle traitors or assassins, and even catch ghost monkeys. As usual, you'll be duly rewarded with EXP, gold or weapons to strengthen your team.



BEAST MISTRESS

As the game's underpinning 'prophecy' dictates, you can transform yourself into 'beasts'. By finding volcanic rock circles, you can suck out their power and use it change yourself into gigantic, enemy-pounding monsters.

The sheer size of the game is impressive enough, and fulfilling all the quests will take a great deal of exploration and bantering with the inhabitants. To help you keep track of everything, you have a quest log which reminds you of all the bits and pieces that may initially go over your head. The quest log is updated on a regular basis, and it's a godsend when you're trying to keep tabs on the names of all the people you've spoken to. Furthermore, developers Cranky Pants have even taken the liberty of pointing out exactly where each and every individual of note is located within the various town and dungeon maps.

Naturally, this isn't going to appeal to everyone. There's plenty of backtracking to be done, along with a fair share of wandering about wondering what the hell you're supposed to be doing next. True, there's a wide range of locations - but no matter how atmospheric they are you can't shake the feeling that this looks like it should have been on the last generation of consoles. The voice-acted sections are sporadic while the FMV storytelling is as grainy as an ex-rental Dario Argento movie.

All rather unfortunate really, because had the game been a little more polished in terms of visuals, controls, camera and menu system, this could have been excellent.

As it stands, though, it's only worth getting if you're an RPG fan looking for something meaty (rather gristly, indeterminate meat) to chew on.

GERAINT EVANS



- Great story.
- Very atmospheric.
- Huge and involving.
- Be a goddess!



- Ropy visuals.
- Poor controls.
- Dodgy menu system.
- Tedious wandering.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Zelda: A Link to The Past
Nintendo
NGC/77 92%
Classic Nintendo adventuring. Brilliant.



6 VISUALS

Jaggies, angular polygonal worlds with minimal textures.

7 SOUNDS

Atmospheric music but more voice-acting would be nice.

4 MASTERY

Looks like it belongs in another time altogether. Ropey.

8 LIFESPAN

It's huge and engrossing and will certainly keep you busy for a while.

VERDICT

Despite all its flaws, the real-time combat, absorbing worlds and detailed plot make for a superbly atmospheric RPG.

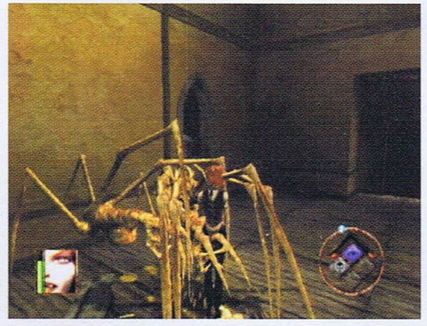




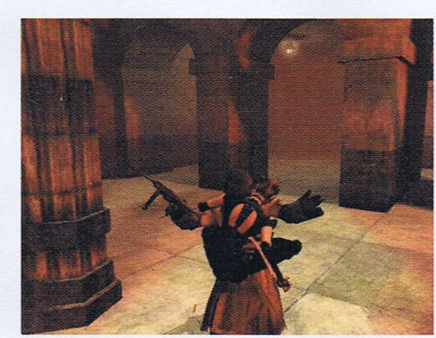
"Shoot the bad guys, toss the guns, pick up some new ones…"



△ Any accusations of *Blood Rayne* abusing every goth cliché are completely unfounded, as evidenced by this attractive screenshot.



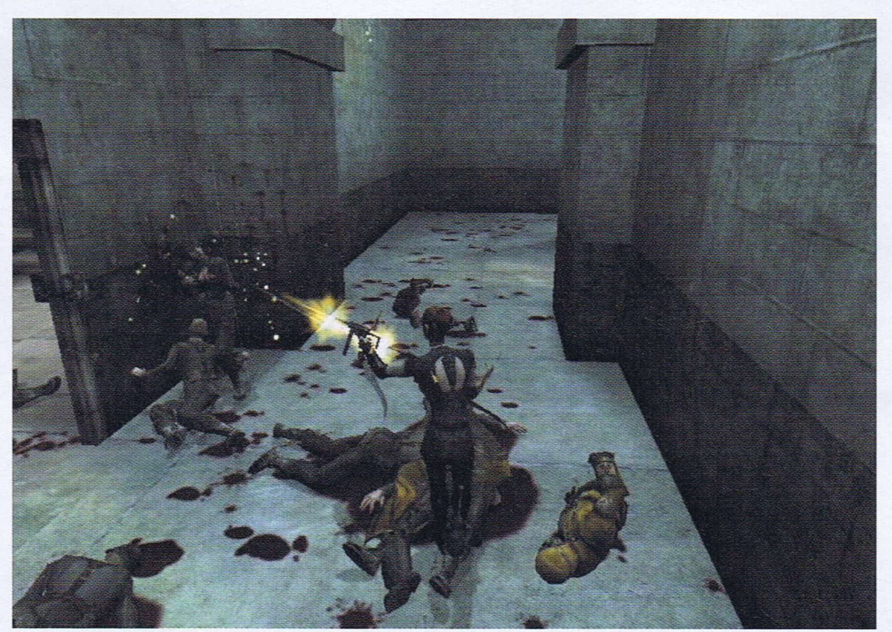
△ Hideous bony spider-demon things! Aarrggghh!



△ Is that a gun in your hand or… Oh, yes. It is.



△ Hop on board and you'll have an instant human shield.



△ There's never a shortage of blood, bullets or bodies in the game. Cleavage too, but that's not a 'b'…

INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	TERMINAL REALITY
PUBLISHER	MAJESCO
PLAYERS	1-4
MEMORY CARD PAGES	1
GBA LINK-UP	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES

WHEN'S IT OUT?
Already out in the US. Sink your fangs into a copy here on the 18th April.

COST: £40



BLOOD RAYNE

Blade meets Buffy meets Dante meets Miss Whiplash… Sounds like one heck of a party!

If you wanted to make a list of the sure-fire, lowest-common-denominator elements to a successful game character, you could do a lot worse than a buxom half-vampire who kills Nazis in bondage gear. The vampire, that is.

Blood Rayne is set in the 1930s, which is pretty much just an excuse to slaughter Nazis by the barrack-load. The action starts in Louisiana, in the swamplands. There are chitinous spidery creatures plaguing the land, along with mutated Cajuns, for reasons that we don't really need concern ourselves with, and it's up to you to jump around, holding down either L or R as you see fit, to kill them. Unfortunately, it's pretty much as simple as that. L slices out with the silver blades on your arms (you gradually increase the combos you can perform as the game goes on), and R fires whatever weapons you've picked up. There are a decent variety of pistols, rifles, shotguns and so on, and you can switch between light and heavy weapon modes with Z, but… It doesn't seem to matter. You shoot the bad guys, you use up your ammunition, toss the guns, and pick up some new ones. There's no real strategy to any of it – you even automatically lock on to your targets.

> "THINGS PERK UP IMMEASURABLY ONCE YOU START SLAYING NAZIS IN INCREASINGLY GORY WAYS"

The other problem with swampland, of course, is all the damn water. Water damages vampires, see, and since your objectives aren't exactly crystal-clear, the environment is murky (the land is the same colour as the water), and the control system takes some getting used to, avoiding it often becomes a dull, frustrating affair. If you picked the wrong control options, may God have mercy on your soul. You'll be lucky if you can even jump.

Things perk up immeasurably once you get out of the swamp and start slaying Nazis in increasingly gory, blood-spattered ways, but for some it may be too late for that. It's battle after battle with some rare puzzle objectives, but it doesn't hang together very well, and doesn't even have the longevity to draw you in. It's a perfectly competent adventure game with loads of claret, but not enough character.

TOM MAYO



- Nazi-killing!
- Loads of gore.
- Cool bullet-time FX (nicked from *Max Payne*).



- Terrible first few hours.
- A bit too short.
- Repetitive action.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…
Blood Omen 2: Legacy of Kain
Acclaim
NGC/77 72%
Vampire game – more puzzles, less breasts.



7 VISUALS
Nice gore FX, interactive scenery, but dodgy animations in places.



6 SOUNDS
Some of the voice-acting is okay, some utterly cringeworthy.



6 MASTERY
A lovely, and limitless bullet-time effect makes all the difference.



4 LIFESPAN
A short game with no replay value to speak of, and limited action.

VERDICT
Okay, so the premise is so kitsch is astounds us, and the execution isn't abysmal. Still, *Blood Rayne* is mediocre at best.







"Months of quality gaming for dewy-eyed nostalgics"

RINGS
These act as a safety barrier. If you get hit, they'll cascade away from you. Make sure you have at least some on you, otherwise you'll die when hit.

SONIC
The old hedgehog. Runs very quickly. It's interesting to note how Sega evolved him over the years. The bandy-legged Sonic 2 Sonic is particularly disturbing…



THE LEVELS
Perhaps more clichéd than other platformers we can mention – but only in reference to Sonic games alone. Expect 'green' levels to start, pinball and temple levels sandwiched between those good-old industrial mazes.

CHAOS EMERALDS
You'll need to enter special stages by collecting the requisite number of rings or by finding the special entry point. Collect all emeralds you can for the best ending.



INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	SEGA
PUBLISHER	INFOGRAMES
PLAYERS	1-2
MEMORY CARD PAGES	2
GBA LINK-UP	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO

WHEN'S IT OUT?
Sonic Mega Collection should be doing the rounds in a store near you now.



COST: £40



SONIC MEGA COLLECTION

Sonic overkill for a new generation of gamers, and for those who have been there and done that…

You can rarely argue with over seven games on one disc – but in the case of *Sonic Mega Collection* it may well be as much of a deterrent as it is a draw. Every game on this compilation is Sonic-related (hence the name), and the main bulk of the package (in terms of gameplay hours) consists of 'classic' Sonic platformers. This is Sonic, and it is Mega – if you didn't like them the first time around, there's nowt new here to change your mind.

However, there will still be an army of fans out there who feel entirely differently, and as is often the case with these kinds of retro collections, it will mostly appeal to those who have already played the games to death (and loved them) ten years ago. If you fall into that category, then you'll revel in what's on offer here – there's a world of nostalgia waiting for you.

WARTS AND ALL

Sonic Mega Collection's selection of games have all been faithfully reproduced. In fact the emulation is so perfect that even the slow-down has been ported across immaculately, sprite flicker is still evident in *Sonic the Hedgehog*, and the horrible, squashed-screen two-player mode from *Sonic 2* still feels as though you're running through custard. Sonic Team have made no effort to spruce any of the games up, but – depending on how nostalgic you're feeling – this is somehow a good thing.

So what of the quality of the individual games themselves? Well, *Sonics 1, 2* and *3* and *Knuckles* are all still hugely enjoyable, and by working through them in order you'll fully appreciate the steady rise in quality, from the lovely level design and music in *Sonic 1* to the subsequent refinement in *Sonic 2* and the lovely innovative touches and challenges in the excellent *Sonic 3*.

Elsewhere on the disc you have the supremely addictive *Puyo Puyo* rip-off *Dr*



LOADING…
Yeah, we know the games have to load off the disc rather than straight off the carts like they used to, but the loading times on some of these is downright painful – especially when you consider that one whole game could probably fit in your GC's internal memory.

SONIC MEGA COLLECTION

Sonic in his heyday, faithfully reproduced



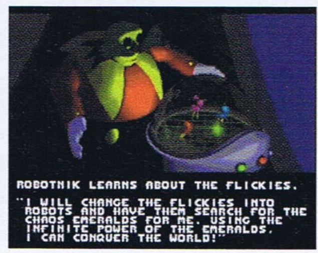

△ *Sonic 3* is arguably the finest game on the disc. *Sonic Spinball*, on the other hand…



△ You're bound to find something to enjoy in *Sonic 1*, even if it's the music. (*Are you sure? – Ed*)



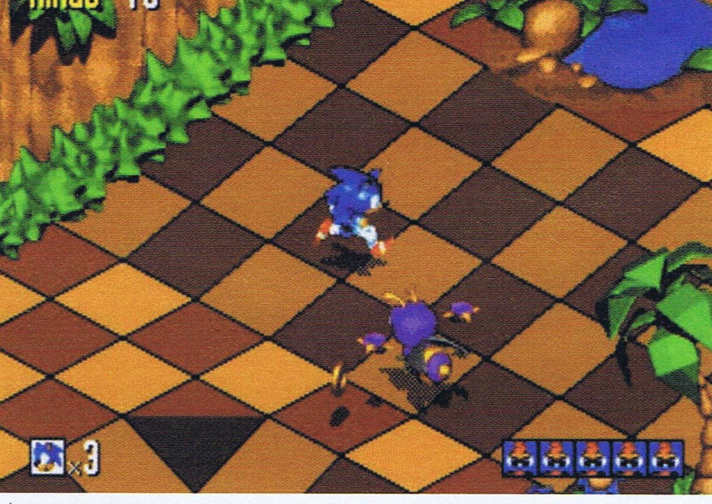
△ Knuckles' different set of skills adds another dimension to *Sonic 3*.







△ If you play through *Sonic 3* sequentially, it'll take some time to finish.



△ *Sonic 3D* was impressive in its day, but it's little more than a curiosity now.

Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine, and also possibly the worst two of the bunch – but still enjoyable enough – *Sonic 3D Blast* and pinball game, *Sonic Spinball*.

> **"THE EMULATION IS SO PERFECT THAT EVEN THE SLOWDOWN HAS BEEN PORTED ACROSS IMMACULATELY"**

MORE FOR YOUR MONEY

As if seven games weren't enough for you, Sonic Team have added a fair few extras to the package. Locked away are extra games for you to uncover (they're released slowly as you play). *Ristar*, *Flicky*, *Blue Sphere* and *Sonic and Knuckles 2* and *3* are available. The best of which are the ancient but still cruelly compelling *Flicky* and *Ristar* – which was criminally overlooked when it was first released and may now get the attention it deserves. The only major let-down is that *Sonic CD* was left out of this selection. It was hardly played the first time (not many people actually bought the Mega CD) and it would have been a great chance to let gamers who missed out the first time around to play what was, arguably, the very best of the 2D *Sonics*.

So there you have it. That's your lot. Like we said before, this will only appeal to those with a deep love of *Sonic* or those who wish to revisit their gaming past and get a selection of classics in their collection from a console which may now be lost to them.

If this is the case, then we can't recommend *Sonic Mega Collection* enough. There are literally months of quality gaming to be had here with the frenetic hedgehog, and anyone with the patience to sit through each adventure in turn will certainly not be disappointed.

GERAINT EVANS



COMIC COLLECTION

As an added bonus, Sonic Team have added a whole load of comic cover art for you to have a look at. The thing is, (and call us greedy if you like), some concept art might have been nice. Or maybe some kind of making-of feature? Moan, moan…



- Seven games for £40.
- Perfectly emulated.
- A lovely trip down memory lane.



- Sonic fandom is compulsory.
- There's no *Sonic CD*.
- It has to 'load'. Why?



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Sonic Advance
Sega
NGC/65 80%
Sonic's most recent 2D outing with a fantastic multiplayer mode.



3 VISUALS

Anyone would swear these games came out on the Mega Drive! Oh.

3 SOUNDS

If we didn't know better we'd think we were listening to a Mega D…

2 MASTERY

Fancy another Mega Drive joke in here anyone? Anyone?



9 LIFESPAN

Seven Games. On one disc. Games: SEVEN Discs: ONE. Got it?

VERDICT

Strictly for the dewy-eyed *Sonic* nostalgics among you, or for those looking for a taste of his 16-bit roots. Worth a look.





"As familiar as a very old friend indeed"

TIME OF DAY
Pleasantly, each level features a dial that enables you to alter the time of day, leading to both pretty visual effects and time-specific events. Natty.

SHADOWRAITH HEARTS
These little beggars are the Shines of Vexx's world. The aim of the game is to collect them, and – oh! – there are ten to collect in each level…



ABILITIES
Anything Mario can do, Vexx can do too, eh? Wall-jumping, shimmying, you name it. Plus, our hero's got a nifty line in combo-based violence. Mint.



VEXX

Acclaim's brilliant new franchise? Or have they simply been raiding Shigsy's ideas drawer?



INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	ACCLAIM
PUBLISHER	ACCLAIM
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	4
GBA LINK-UP	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES

WHEN'S IT OUT?
Should be round about now for UK-specific bipedal carbon-based lifeform units. (Meaning you.)



COST: £40

There's nothing wrong with *Vexx*, as such, it's just that it doesn't do anything you haven't seen before, and what it does do is as familiar as a very old friend indeed. It's perfectly competent, robustly constructed, and relatively absorbing. But it's also like playing a faint, smudged photocopy of *Mario Sunshine*, and why would you want to do that when you can bask in the dazzling Technicolor glory of the original?

It all comes down to the structure. *Vexx* is a 3D platformer, and each of its disparate worlds contains ten 'Shadowraith Hearts' to be found, and – get this! – some are collected from gathering 100 heart shards and also six soul casks. Redolent of coins and blue coins, eh?

And that's just the start. Vexx himself can do almost anything Mario can, and a skilful combination of leaping, climbing and ledge-shimmying is the key to unlocking many of the game's tasks. The big difference with *Vexx* is that there's a combo-based fighting system, which makes for some satisfying (if incongruous, given the cutesy surroundings) violence. But it's a tiny shaft of difference in a world of sameness.

Nonetheless, perhaps it's unfair to lambast Acclaim for pilfering *Mario* so thoroughly, as *Vexx*, even given that it's a shameless thief and the camera is wildly erratic, is still fun to play. But it's intriguing to note that *Super Mario 64*, which ushered in 3D gaming as we know it, has now been so thoroughly ransacked that the features it introduced – that were once so shiny and new – are now the staple ingredients in every middling and not-so-middling platformer around. When will the next revolution arrive?

But magpie tendencies aside, *Vexx* is, to damn it with faint praise, not bad. Not great, but certainly not bad. Hmm.

JES BICKHAM

> **"EVEN GIVEN THAT IT'S A SHAMELESS THIEF AND THE CAMERA IS WILDLY ERRATIC, IT IS STILL FUN TO PLAY"**



- Highly competent.
- Well-structured.
- A nice line in combo-led violence.



- You've played this one before.
- Glitchy camera.
- Samey.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...
Mario Sunshine
Nintendo
NGC/73, 96%
Knocks *Vexx*'s socks off, and then some. Good old Mario, eh?





7 VISUALS
Crisp and sharp, but some of the garish environments grate.



6 SOUNDS
Highly repetitive effects and minimal music and voices. Not great.



6 MASTERY
Smooth enough, but not pushing the Cube in any particular way.

6 LIFESPAN
15 hours if you stick with it. But will you want to?

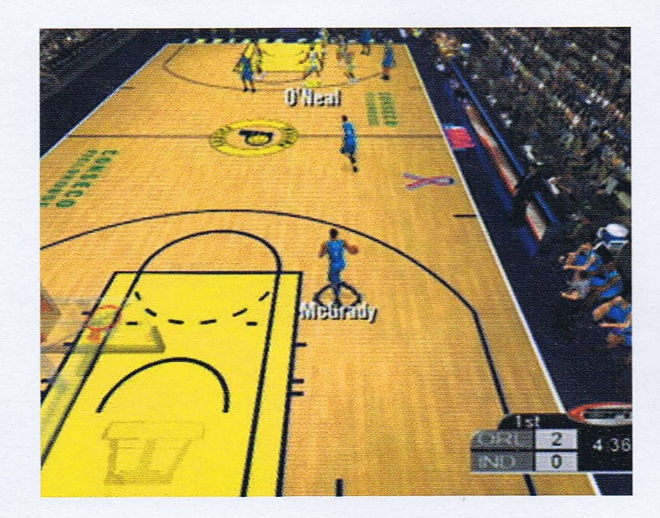
VERDICT
Well-crafted but unashamedly derivative, this *Mario* knock-off at least features a few enlivening fisticuffs.





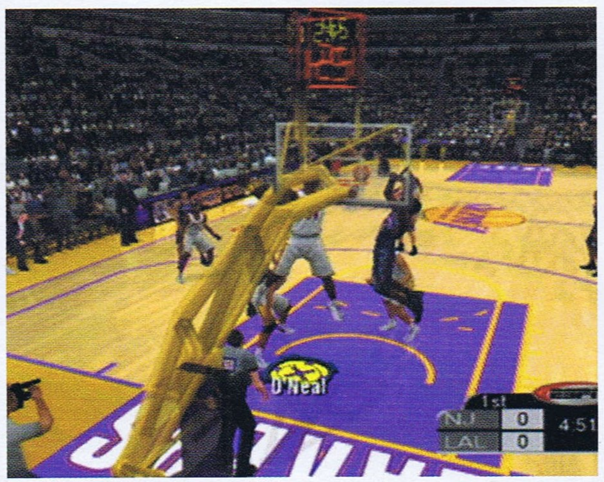


Tedious basketball given some Sega magic

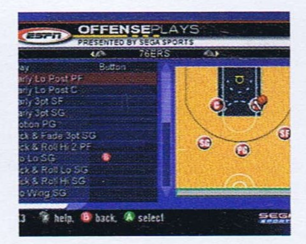


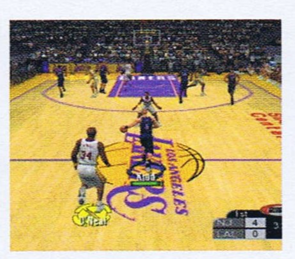


Use the camera options to clock a look at the super-slick animation of the players. Unfortunately, you won't be able to play like this for very long – after a while, you start feeling a bit sick this close up.



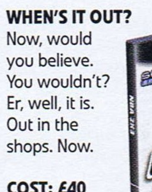
When you 'slam dunk' da 'funk', the camera swoops in for a gander.







You can switch between players with A, and batter back shots and potential dunkage with B. Watch out for Z too – that's tricks.

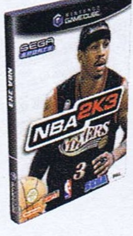


INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	SEGA
PUBLISHER	INFOGRAMES
PLAYERS	1-4
MEMORY CARD PAGES	12
GBA LINK-UP	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO

WHEN'S IT OUT? Now, would you believe. You wouldn't? Er, well, it is. Out in the shops. Now.

COST: £40



NBA 2K3

Sega don't do many things wrong, and they're not about to start here. It's basketball and it's good. Honest.

If you're up on your basketball then you'll know that *NBA Courtside 2* from now-out-of-favour second-party Leftfield was the hoop game of choice on the Nintendo format. What it lacked in charisma, it made up for in other key areas, pushing delicious visuals and quick-fire passing over rosters and showbiz dunking.

NBA 2K3, the newie in the gradually more impressive Sega Sports line, introduces itself via an ESPN news report, and never looks back. It has the charisma, it has the visuals, it has the quick-fire passing, it has rosters (shedloads of them), and it has the ring-obliterating dunking. In short, it's probably the best b-ball game yet. Maybe even ever.

As a game it's watertight. Matches move undeterred from one end to the other, the animation is fantastic, the detail is incredible (players and stadiums are modelled on their real-life counterparts), and the controls are tight. The quicker you nail the controls, the quicker the game becomes accessible – you'll need to work out how to make steals and break up CPU attacks or you'll be drowning under the weight of three-figure scores. Once you do, the game gets a lot better, offering a surprisingly tactical spin on proceedings, which you don't really expect. Patience – and the occasional fake pass – become Your Best Friend very, very quickly.

"THE FRANCHISE MODE IS HOW THIS SEES OFF THE COMPETITION. QUITE SIMPLY, THIS AREA IS FANTASTIC..."

The Franchise mode is how this ultimately sees off the competition, though. Allowing you to access the NBA draft, it also has an amazingly detailed coaching area, where you can learn completely new moves that you can chuck into the mixer mid-game, as well as a scouting option, giving you the chance to pluck nobodies from the college game. Quite simply, this area is fantastic.

There *are* niggles – like the way you don't seem to be able to score from certain angles – but it won't matter because this is superb.

TIM WEAVER



- Franchise mode.
- Fantastic animation.
- Accurate modelling.
- Brilliant presentation.



- Dodgy shooting angles on occasions.
- Swinging end-to-end viewpoint isn't ideal.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...
NBA Courtside 2002
Nintendo
NGC/66 79%
Not as good, but probably dirt cheap.



8 VISUALS
The occasional clipping problem, but otherwise this looks 'the business'.

7 SOUNDS
Great commentary that eventually repeats. The usual tannoy announcer.

8 MASTERY
You can't whack it. Technically, this does a bit of everything.



9 LIFESPAN
This could just about go on forever – Franchise mode will see to that.

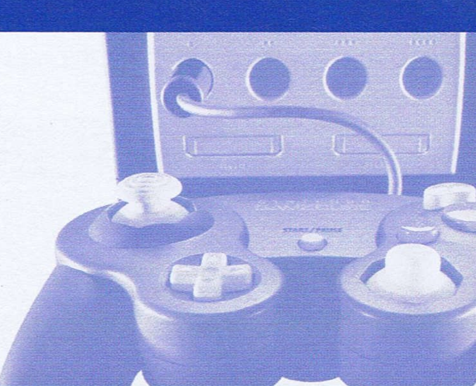
VERDICT
The best basketball game on Gamecube. Terrifically playable, surprisingly tactical and oodles and oodles of depth. Get in there.

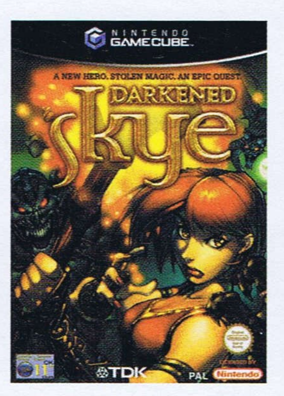










DARKENED SKYE

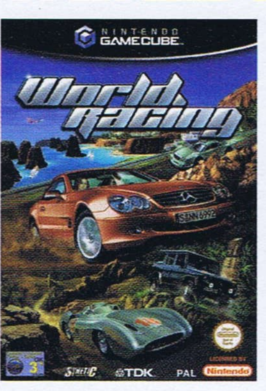
Skye of Lynlora is a shepherd with a restless spirit, a taste for adventure, and a smart mouth. Her humdrum existence is forever changed one day when she discovers magic and is chosen to battle the forces of darkness, which are about to destroy the world. It never rains but it pours, eh?

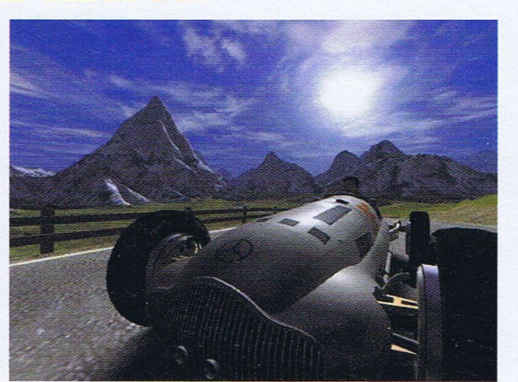
Armed with her wits, spells and weapons, Skye finds herself on a quest for five ancient prisms that can save the world from evil. It's a tough call but at least she's got some company on this death-defying mission. That comes in the form of her snidey sidekick, the obligatory wise-old-knows-everything character and a mysterious love interest who has a bad habit of disappearing just when he's needed. Good work!

Skye's mission: Cast spells. Unravel the secrets of her past. Trade wisecracks. Kick monster butt. Save the world.

Availability
Darkened Skye is scheduled to release on GameCube on 28th March 2003 with a suggested retail price of £39.99.

WORLD RACING







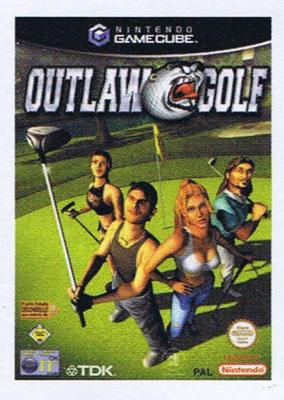
World Racing is an action-packed, 3D racing simulation game for next-generation consoles and PC. The game is a virtual driving experience that enables you to take the current range of Mercedes-Benz cars and vintage models, plus racing cars and prototypes, for a spin.

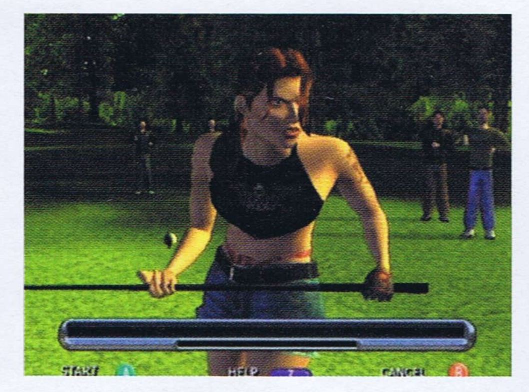
In addition to the excellent driving simulation, *World Racing* sets a new standard in computer-simulated 3D driving sensation, including a more accessible arcade option.

World Racing combines action-packed racing with mission-based elements. The aim is to become the number one test driver of Mercedes-Benz racing cars. By successfully negotiating their way through some 50 different tasks, race tracks and special tests, players gradually develop their skills, gaining more experience, new cars and expert qualifications.

Availability
World Racing is scheduled to release on GameCube on 28th March 2003 with a suggested retail price of £39.99.

OUTLAW GOLF

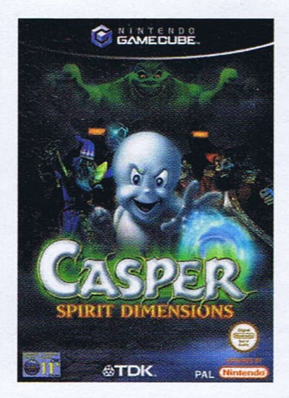




Players can choose to play ten outrageous characters with attitude, and gameplay takes place over three challenging courses, each demonstrating their own unique, bizarre and game-enhancing characteristics.

Outlaw Golf *will feature:*
- A top shelf golf engine, stellar physics and excellent graphics.
- Tournament mode, Exhibition mode and the Outlaw Range: players are given the chance to play for money or to play against their opponents or the clock.
- Choice of ten unique characters to play as. Each golfer has their unique caddy.
- Play through 30 tournament events to unlock better clubs and balls.
- Spin, hook, slice, putt and break.
- Up to four players.

Availability
Outlaw Golf will be available on GameCube on 21st March 2002, suggested retail price £39.99.

CASPER SPIRIT DIMENSIONS

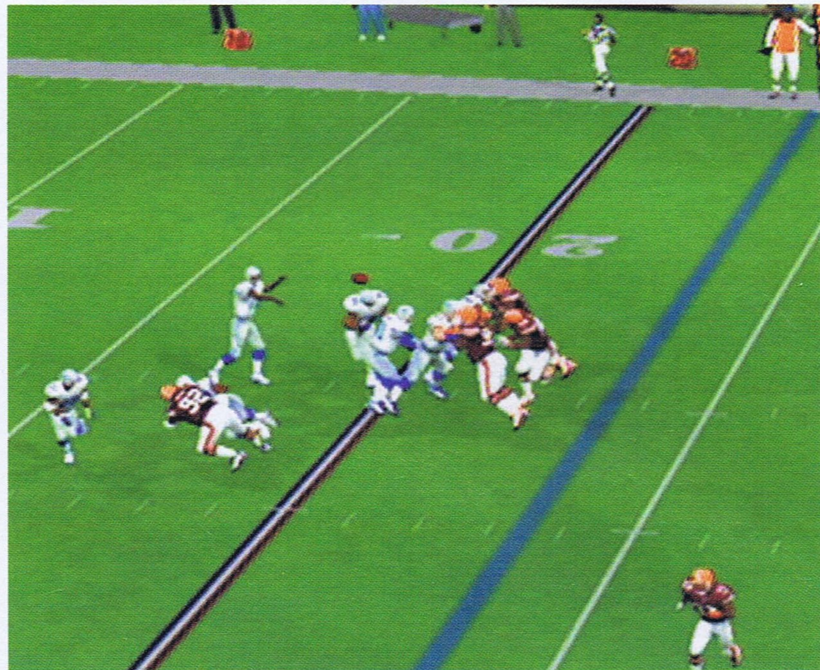
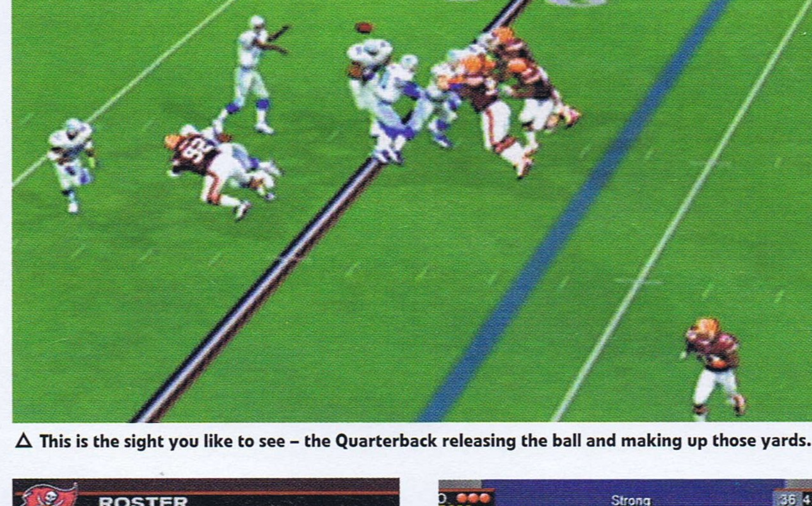


Spiral into phantom dimensions where the friendly ghost will battle fiercely for the fate of the spirit world. We strongly advise that you prepare for the unexpected as portals will transport gamers into mysterious realms that are populated by ghosts of the past, present and future, all possessed by the Casper's evil enemy Kibosh.

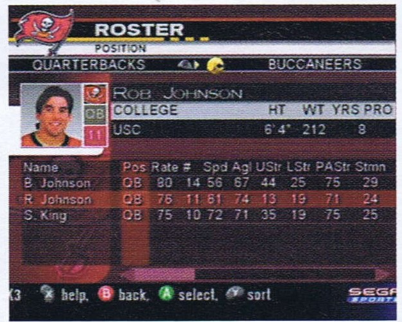
Game features include:
- Frighteningly realistic graphics.
- Full freedom of fluid flight throughout all of the spirit environments.
- Four eerie worlds – Spirit World, Kibosh's Factory, Spirit Amusement Park and Medieval World – with a total of 16 gigantic levels.
- Four outrageous bosses in each world, including Casper's arch-nemesis Kibosh.
- Key pick-ups that will lead Casper to bosses, extra lives and enhancements of his abilities.

Availability
Casper® Spirit Dimensions is out now on Gamecube with a suggested retail price of £29.99.

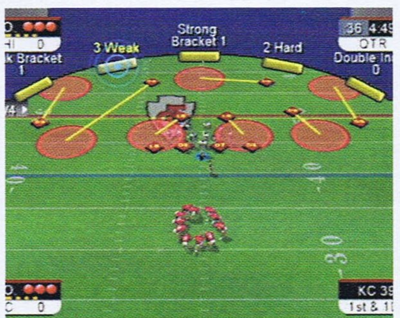
Yowser! It's a *Madden*-baiting mammoth from Sega

△ This is the sight you like to see – the Quarterback releasing the ball and making up those yards.



△ Rosters and tactics. You'll grow to love 'em



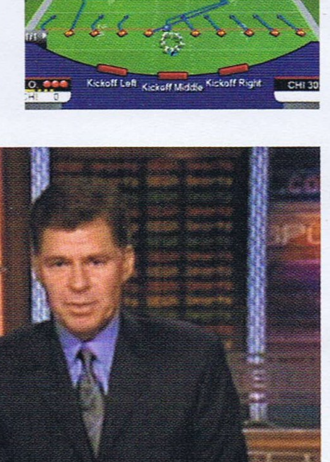
△ If you don't 'get it', don't bother turning up.



△ There's plenty of free-flowing play, but prepared to be chopped down.





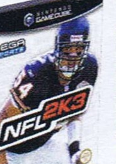
△ The presentation is outstanding with a cannily tied-in ESPN news report.

INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	SEGA
PUBLISHER	INFOGRAMES
PLAYERS	1-4
MEMORY CARD PAGES	12
GBA LINK-UP	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES

WHEN'S IT OUT?
Go looking for *NFL 2K3* straight away as it's in the shops now. Useful. Very useful indeed.

COST: £40



NFL 2K3

Starting grid! 'Iron comes to town, courtesy of Sega…

If you're 'into' your American Football, it's unlikely you would have been tempted away from *Madden*. EA's grey matter-dissolving gridiron game is so comprehensive and so brilliantly structured it's managed to see off all major competition for what seems like decades.

Sega's *NFL 2K3* is the latest new recruit to square up to EA's multiple-chinned mascot. Boasting a steaming great Franchise mode (flick back a page to see what a difference it made to *NBA 2K3*), that gives you access to huge lists of players, as well as college football teams, (think of the way you can pluck nobodies from non-league soccer and turn them into superstars in *Championship Manager* and you get the idea), *NFL 2K3* also includes all the usual modes of play, though it pushes game tactics further than any other football title ever.

If you don't know your way around a football field, don't even bother turning up. There are more plays, more options and more realism than even *Madden* can boast – organising your 11 men into an effective alliance is hard work. In fact, it takes hours. You can't just send them out and hope for the best – you need to think about it before you do it otherwise you get crushed under an avalanche of canny CPU offensive moves.

That's possibly why, at times, it's not as much fun as *Madden*, a game which lets you off the hook from time to time, and also feels *slightly* more arcadey. But the flipside is that this tends to feel more rewarding because you have to work harder and you certainly have to work longer.

"AT TIMES IT DOESN'T FEEL AS MUCH FUN AS MADDEN, BUT IT FEELS MORE REWARDING, MORE OFTEN"

With ESPN branding, this competes easily with *Madden*'s razzmatazz. Technically, it's a dream, sporting genius-level AI, less interrupted play, and razor-sharp visuals.

The best American Football game yet, then? Ooh, it's a toughie. But probably. Just.

TIM WEAVER

+
- Massive amount of plays and options.
- Franchise mode.
- Looks and sounds ace.

–
- Not as friendly as the *Madden* series.
- It's hard to dip in and out of the game.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...
Madden NFL 2002
Nintendo
NGC/64 75%
The other big football game – easier to use and just as good.

8 VISUALS
Looks the absolute business. You can't knock it, really.

8 SOUNDS
Great commentary, plus all the usual grunts and groans from the field.

8 MASTERY
Looks great, sounds great, hardly drops a frame throughout.

8 LIFESPAN
Massive. The only worry is that you'll give up due to its complexity.

VERDICT
If you understand the rules and don't mind being kicked in the teeth, this'll be a little piece of heaven. It *is* American Football.





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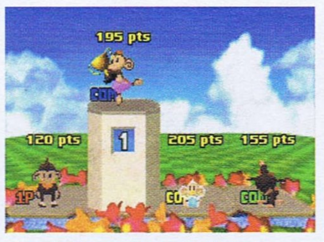


△ Banana bonuses are tempting, but only if there's enough time on the clock.

△ Monkey Duel is a linked race around a perilously thin track.



△ Monkey Bowling. Get the angle right then put some spin on the ball.


△ Only 60 levels to win the cup.


△ Monkey Fight's in there too.



SUPER MONKEY BALL JR



FORMAT	GBA
FROM	INFOGRAMES
PLAYERS	1-4
SINGLE-CART	
LINK UP	YES
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	NOW
COST	£30

Hey Jr, that's no way to treat a GBA. Stop chewing it and start pounding buttons!



Just how has this most enjoyable of Gamecube titles has survived a spell in the code compactorizor? Well, if it wasn't for the fact that we're playing it right now – stea-dy, stea-dy, go-go-go… whoa, WHOA! – we'd have said that such a perfect port was impossible. Just about everything has been included – with the exception of *Monkey Target* and *Monkey Billiards* from the minigames – and it all whizzes about the screen at a frightening lick of speed. Astonishing stuff.

Choose any of the four original chimps in single-player – say a quick eep-eep to Aiai, Meemee, Gongon and Baby – and you'll find an instantly recognisable world of tilting, chequered lawns and split-second battles against time and gravity. The analogue control of the original is brilliantly imitated with greater or lesser tilt provided by the buttons. However, the real delights arrive when you realise you can multiplay wherever and whenever you like. You don't even need a link cable and mates with other GBAs to double, triple or quadruple the fun. Both *Monkey Bowling* and *Monkey Golf* retain the pass-and-play feature of the original so, as long as you don't mind getting grubby paw prints all over your screen, you'll never play alone.

The music's also spot-on, with some of the heaviest bass we're experienced on our headphones, and the sampling eerily accurate – right down to the giggles of Baby as you select her.

All of which again begs the question: why go with the kiddy-cute addition of 'Jr'? If there's any game that says 'Advance', that says what the future of handheld games *should* be, it's this.

"YOU CAN NOW MULTIPLAY WHEREVER AND WHENEVER YOU LIKE. YOU'LL NEVER PLAY ALONE"



DID YOU KNOW? Today there are less than 200,000 chimpanzees in the world. That may not sound like much, but if you were to starve them, sellotape knives to their hands and feet and have them invade, say, the Isle of Wight, such an enraged simian army could decimate the population in days. Easily.



△ Two against one? No fair! Donovan keeps control while Felicia tries some meaty attacks.



△ For a big hit, stack up same-colour blocks or link colour combos that trigger in succession.



△ It's hard to concentrate on your fighters but special attacks are rewarded different animation.

SUPER PUZZLE FIGHTER II TURBO

Ken you feel iiiiit? Only if Ryu launches a Hadoken sharpish.



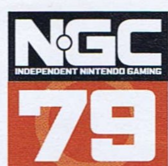
INFO BURST

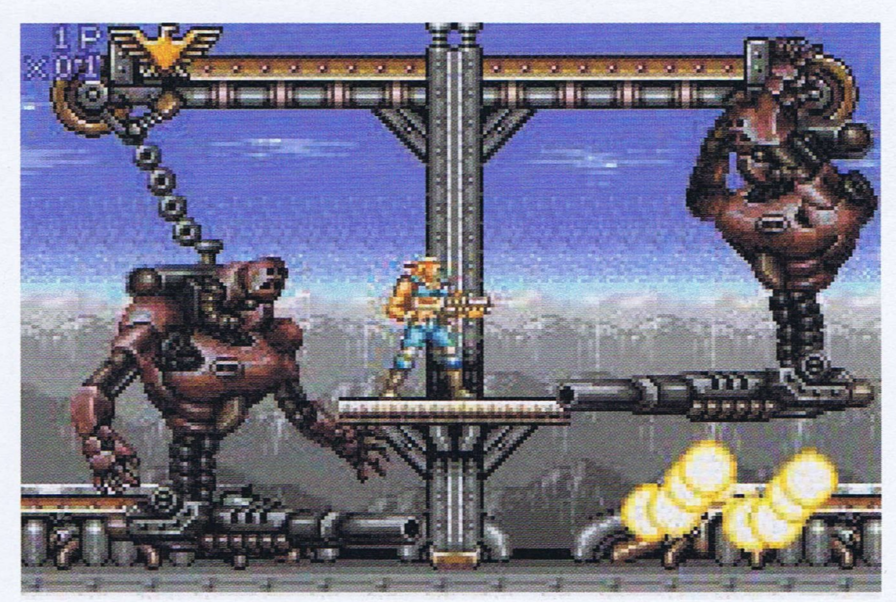
FORMAT	GBA
FROM	CAPCOM
PLAYERS	1-2
SINGLE-CART	
LINK UP	YES
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	NOW
COST	£30

By all rights this should be the GBA puzzle game to send all other GBA puzzle games packing. It's got all the right elements in place: dinky Ken, dinky Ryu, and dinky Chun-Li and the gang all chucking miniature dragon punches and baby fireballs around willy-nilly, while the classic drop-and-rotate puzzler cascades at lightning speed behind them.

Add eight playable characters, four modes – including one where you play head-to-head on a single GBA – plus a detailed tutorial that'll polish old skills, and you'd think there'd be little that could touch this. But you'd be wrong.

It's a good take on the original game but there are two reasons why Bub and Bobs' scaly tails are still safe. First, you'll find yourself facing a learning curve that initiates you gently then runs you over repeatedly with a bin wagon. The result? A real uncertainty over whether skill or pure luck was responsible for your last victory. Secondly, you'll soon realise that the GBA's screen doesn't do you any favours when it comes to seeing the hollow boxes that get hurled at you by your opponent. Hardly devastating in itself, but still a real bind when it comes to recovery from your linked combos and enough of a handicap to really scupper your defence. Roll on the arrival of the GBA SP.

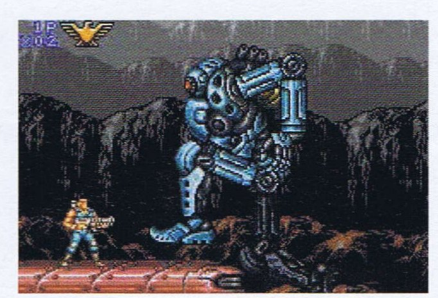




△ It's so damn hard in places that the only way to survive is by memorising the levels exactly. Moreover, you'll need to memorise your actions for each level – one false move and you're toast.



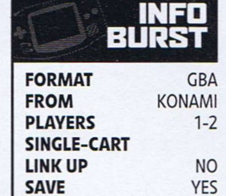
△ Even this opening section on Level 1 will take a few tries to negotiate without losing a life…



△ Unfortunately, without the overhead levels and the ravages of time, this doesn't hold up well.

CONTRA ADVANCE THE ALIEN WARS EX

Konami violate, then castrate, one of our all-time favourite SNES games…



INFO BURST

FORMAT	GBA
FROM	KONAMI
PLAYERS	1-2
SINGLE-CART	
LINK UP	NO
SAVE	YES
OUT	TBC
COST	£30



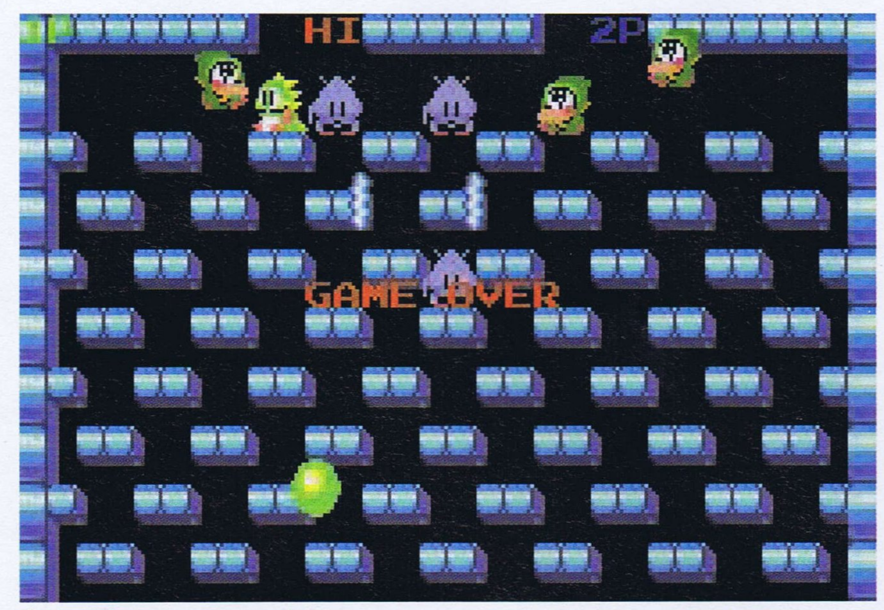
What a huge disappointment this turned out to be. We're massive fans of the SNES version, and we were expecting great things from this. This isn't *Contra* as we remember it, though. Instead, it's a butchered version that's had it's lovely overhead levels replaced with a selection of side-scrolling levels ripped straight from the not-quite-so-good Mega Drive installment, *Contra: Hard Corps*.

It's gut wrenchingly difficult, to boot. Maybe we're all knocking on a bit, but we don't remember *Contra* being this tough. The problem is that it's relentlessly unforgiving: enemies always approach from both sides, giving you a split second to turn around to deal with them. Furthermore, many of the sections are rather unfair. You can, for example, die in a hail of bullets, only to be respawned in the middle of the same hail, doomed to repeat the same death for eternity. Well, as long as your lives last.

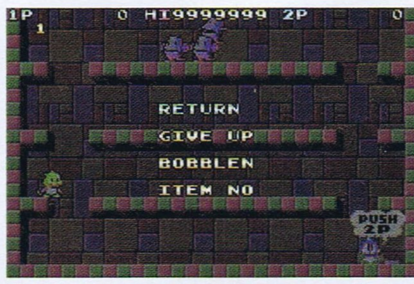
What this boils down to is a series of levels that have to be meticulously memorised in order to stay one step ahead of the game, and no matter how hard you try, frustrating death is inevitable on almost every level. *Contra* has always been like this, but you'd think they'd have made some improvements after ten years. In 2003, a port that's not only aged badly, but been crucified in the process is not exactly our cup of tea.



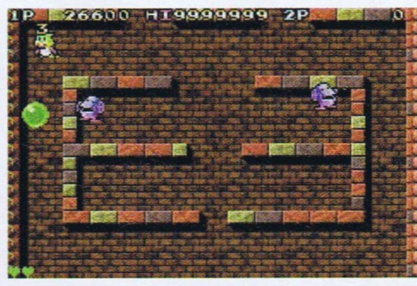
"This is genuine *Bubble Bobble*, as good as it ever was"



△ The difficulty towards the end of the game is pretty extreme. You really need two players.



△ A fine example of a pause menu screenshot.



△ New version, complete with backgrounds.



△ Simultaneous popping scores big points.



△ Enhance your bubbles with sweetie power.



△ Press L to scale the screen and get a much better view of what's happening.

BUBBLE BOBBLE OLD & NEW

Retro magic with the funkiest dinosaurs on earth.

INFO BURST

FORMAT	GBA
FROM	EMPIRE/TAITO
PLAYERS	1-2
SINGLE-CART LINK UP	YES
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	NOW
COST	£20



You can't beat the classics, can you? When we see a modern update of a game we've spent a small fortune on at the arcades and on various home formats, our first reaction is usually to get that horrible sinking feeling – like walking towards your car and realising, from a distance, that the shiny stuff on the pavement used to be your passenger window.

But fortunately, nobody's swiped the CD player out of *Bubble Bobble*, even if it does have that *Old & New* tag. And even more fortunately, it's no relation to the dismal Game Boy versions of the past. This is genuine *Bubble Bobble*, and it's as good as it ever was.

To recap, for those who might not have run into a *Bubble Bobble* before, it's a platform game with a strong puzzle element, involving two dinosaurs that blow magic bubbles.

The bubbles are used to imprison bullies, which then turn into fruit when the bubble is popped (by jumping on it or introducing it to a dinosaur's spiny back). Chain reactions score big points, and the faster a screen is completed, the better the chances of getting something really tasty on the next one, like a giant slab of cake or the mother of all watermelons.

It's a great solo game and a magical two-player experience (which is why it comes bundled with a free link cable). After about the halfway mark in the 100-screen journey, it starts to get pretty tough without the help of a second player. Anyway, things are much more fun throughout when the two dinosaurs are co-operating to burst bubbles, and competing like demons to steal the best bits of fruit.



△ In single-cart link-up, all food is cake and the power-ups are question marks



△ The red fellas have been bubbled but not burst. Makes them mad, that does.

BUBBLE POWER

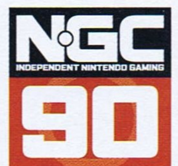
Various power-up items appear from time to time, such as speed shoes and sweeties (for enhancing the bubbles). There are other mysterious and high-scoring items, such as the doorway to a diamond-filled bonus screen, and where the new version beats the old one is by keeping a record of every item you've collected so far (there are loads of them).

The other difference between the two is in the graphics. The new one has colourful backgrounds and the enemies look different. It's all a bit easier to see with the original black backgrounds, but then you don't get that item-finder diary.

Bubble Bobble fans might be a little put out by the music, which has slightly changed instruments in the original version and gets a total remix in the new one, but it's grown on us after a few hundred repetitions. It's one of the classic videogame theme tunes, and a bit of tweaking won't stop it rattling around in your head while you're trying to sleep.

Tapping the left shoulder-button scales the graphics to fit the screen, which is surely the only way to play, and there's a single-cart link-up mode with a taster selection of the first 12 screens. You'll have to get two carts if you want to play it properly. Still cheaper and more bedroom-friendly that buying a mouldy old *Bubble Bobble* arcade machine.

It's a brilliant conversion, and the fact that we've split our time fairly evenly between the two variations shows that the modern update isn't to be sniffed at.





"Interesting boss battles but nothing to distinguish it"



Δ Jim's Solar Surfer has been broken and scattered by the authorities. First job is to mend it.



Δ You're safe against these Robot Cops as long as you don't stray into their field of vision.



Δ Electrified force fields are a killer. Scan the area for a switch, using the Morph Look ability.

TREASURE PLANET



INFO BURST

FORMAT	GBA
FROM	UBI SOFT
PLAYERS	1
SINGLE-CART	
LINK UP	NO
SAVE	PASSWORD
OUT	NOW
COST	£30

Very few pieces of hate in this rum pirate platformer.

The film just bombed in the US and, unless every kid under eight suddenly decides that space pirates are the coolest thing since spitballs, then the same fate probably awaits this game. Which is a crippler for the GBA version of Jim Hawkins' adventures, as it's damn near the top of its class – *Spyro* just pips it on gameplay.

Like the purple puff-dragon, it's a licensed platformer that isn't a 2D side-scroller (may they rest in peace), and instead presents Jim's world in wonderful, isometric pseudo-3D. What this means, as you play, is that levels stretch out around your character, giving you room to explore, room to stalk enemies before pummelling them, and room just to mess about at your leisure.

As a character, though, Jim is actually quite limited – especially when it comes to steering diagonally – but his shortcomings are there for a reason. Call upon Morph – your constant, floating, pink, companion fish-type-thing – and you'll be able to utilise any one of seven different skills. If you end up staring at a stone blocking your path, then a quick shoulder barge with a 'Morph Smash' will see you right.

Plus, what starts out with a basic 'Morph Look' at the room ahead, soon develops into taxing combination of many skills as you face increasingly complex puzzles, 'seeing' enemies and run after run of skittish platforms. Sadly, it's the size of the thing that eventually knocks *Treasure Planet* back, as the absence of any in-game save points makes mid-level death harsher than a shivered timber shoved up the old sea-dog.

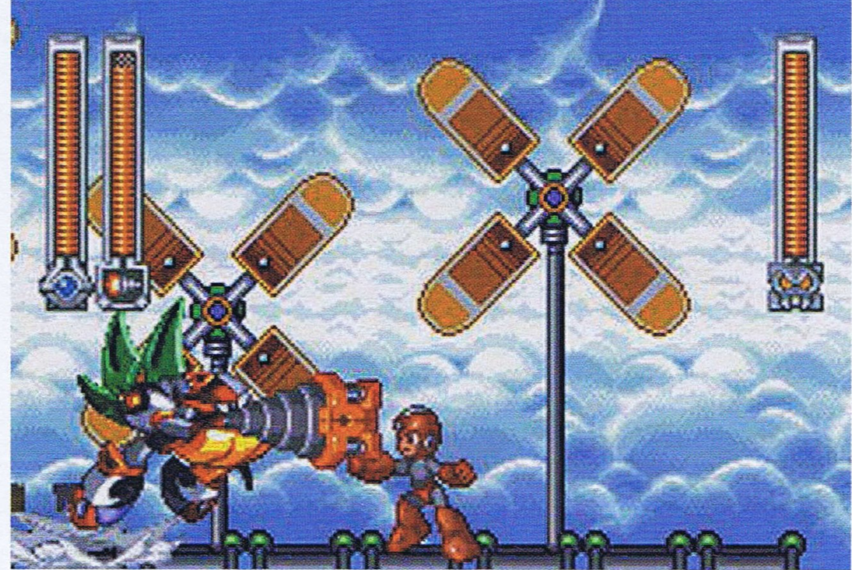




Δ *Mega Man* has always involved a few leaps of faith and these skyways are no different.



Δ Even stripped of his extras, Bass is still the better character to enter into boss battles with.



Δ Costume changes and weapon upgrades might provide incentive, but the scenery is just dull.

MEGA MAN & BASS



INFO BURST

FORMAT	GBA
FROM	CAPCOM
PLAYERS	1
SINGLE-CART	
LINK UP	NO
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	21ST MARCH
COST	£30

'Mega'. Just doesn't feel that big anymore, does it?

Why bother? With *Metroid Fusion* loose in the world there's precious little that old M&M can offer that Samus doesn't already do in a bigger, bolder and better way. Weapon power-ups, for instance. Yep they're in there, yes they do give you extra firepower if you've got the cash – but do they really alter gameplay in any way? Well, your rate of fire and the power of your blasts do improve with each upgrade but you'll find no earned abilities and no unlockable areas here.

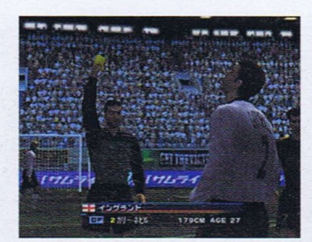
You do get to choose between two characters, with Bass being a more blasty, arcade experience. He gets a bigger gun from the off and, while he can't perform Mega Man's slide tackle to start with, his double-jump makes the opening platforms a helluva lot easier to navigate.

Beyond that, some interesting boss battles and lots of tricky leapage with all the predictable surfaces thrown in – slidey wet ones, crumbly old ones, ones that go up, ones that go zzzz… And yet nothing, other than a tarnished old-skool licence, to distinguish this from middling multi-tiered shooters like *Earthworm Jim*. Shame.

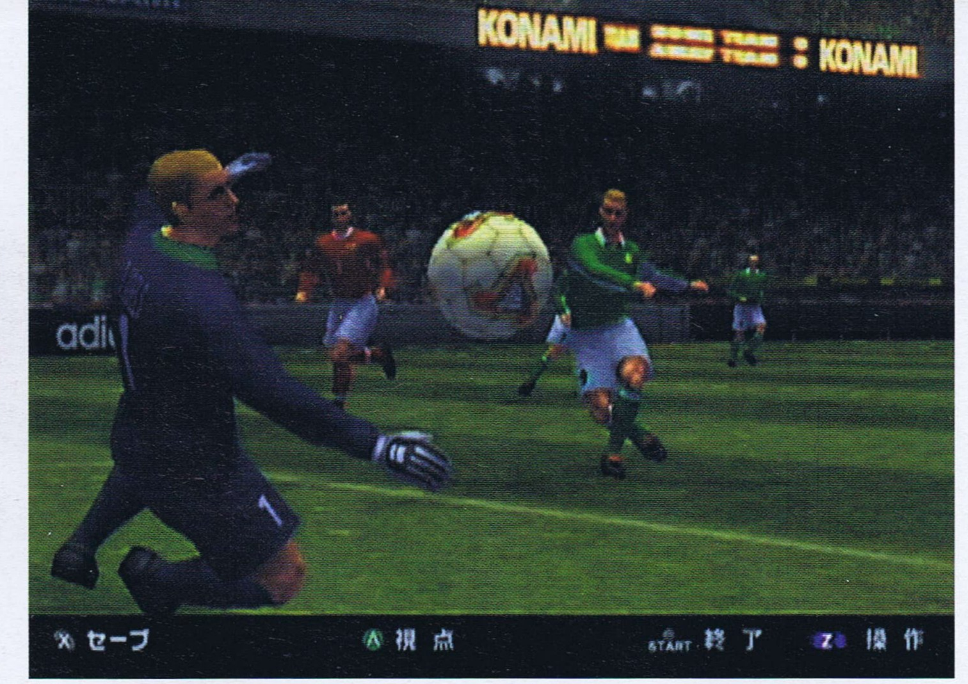


"As complete and thorough as you could hope for"







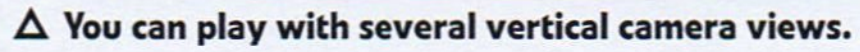


Favourite replays, unlike this shot from Duff, can be saved. To a giant memory card, that is.



Loss time means injury time. Better hoof it to the striker and hope penalties can be avoided.





You can play with several vertical camera views.



Another supremely delicate finish.

WINNING ELEVEN 6 FINAL EVOLUTION

***Pro Evolution* on Gamecube?** The bigger, smarter brother of *ISS* plays a blinder in its first Nintendo appearance.





INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	KONAMI
PUBLISHER	KONAMI
PLAYERS	1–4
MEMORY CARD PAGES	98(!)
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO

WHEN'S IT OUT?
Out now on Japanese import, with no immediate plans for a European PAL release.

COST: £40





GET INTO THE GAME

How to get to the good stuff through the text-heavy menus...

THE KNOWLEDGE

If you've played one of the PS2 versions, you'll be right at home after a short period of getting used to the reworked controls. For everyone else, choose the fifth option on the main menu, then select the first option on the sub-menu that pops up, select a team, and choose the third option on the club house menu to access the training videos. Each section shows several ways to perform various moves, and you can keep watching and tapping along on the buttons until it's second nature.



Football games have been done to death, right? If you already have *FIFA 2003*, then what's the point in splashing out for a Freeloader and an import copy of a game that's packed with as much Japanese text as you'd find in your average RPG?

Because, quite simply, the snappily titled *World Soccer Winning Eleven 6 Final Evolution* dumps on every other football sim, from a great height.

It's an enhanced Japanese special edition of *Pro Evolution Soccer 2*, the massively successful PS2 title, and its appearance on Gamecube comes as something of a surprise. The *Pro Evo* series is synonymous with Sony's consoles, having sold countless millions of copies along with a mountain of PlayStations, which is why we'd always

WINNING ELEVEN 6 FINAL EVOLUTION

The world's best football game just got even better on Gamecube

FRIENDLY

There's a whole new tactical dimension with four players on the field. You can play two against two, three against one, or four against the computer – the more players you have, the easier it becomes.

CROWD

The fans are as raucous and partisan as you'd expect. They usually boo the away team, and even boo their own side if things aren't going too well for the home favourites.

NAMED AND NUMBERED

The game has the FIFPro licence, so many of the real player names and likenesses are included. There are English and European club sides too, although you'll have to spend a few hours in the team editing mode to change the names for those. Man United are called Aragon, for example.



RADAR

Glance down at the radar to check if a team-mate is available further down the pitch, then launch a precision through-ball, a long cross-field lob, a defence-splitting one-two, or just run with it.

KICK OFF

Dan's Ireland against Geraint's Wales should have been a fairly even match, but the quality of Robbie Keane and Damien Duff, coupled with Geraint's lack of 'skillz', meant a humiliating 7-0 whupping for the boyos in red. Practice makes perfect.



assumed that Sony had some kind of exclusivity agreement with Konami. Happily for Gamecube owners, that's not the case.

THE REAL DEAL

The thing that sets it apart from all of the competition, including the recent *Pro Evo*-alike *FIFA 2003*, is a tangible feeling of solidity and control. Where other football sims, no matter how good, have some niggling fault that you have to try to ignore in order to have a decent game, *Winning Eleven* is as complete and thorough as you could hope for.

There are no cheesy goals, no unwelcome assistance from the computer, and no way to win on the hardest difficulty setting without having a genuine understanding of the real sport.

> **"THERE'S NO WAY TO WIN ON THE HARDEST DIFFICULTY LEVEL WITHOUT HAVING A GENUINE UNDERSTANDING OF THE SPORT"**

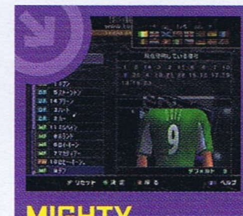
Learning how to play it well is a daunting task. You'll need to start with the basic passes and shots before moving on to the intimidatingly complex stuff, which is explained via video demonstrations in the training mode. It's tough, but the rewards for perseverance are great.

A one-two pass in most football games is done via a simple double-tap of a button. Here you have to hold the left trigger, press pass, run into position, and press a different button depending on whether you want the return ball to be passed along the ground to your player's feet, chipped over the defence, or knocked into an empty area of the pitch for the player to chase.

Alternatively you could use the C-stick for better precision, and this too can be combined with the shoulder buttons to select a high ball, low ball or through ball.

There are even more options for shooting, such as powerful shots, chipped shots, curling shots, dummies, and at least four different ways to take a free kick.





MIGHTY MEMORY

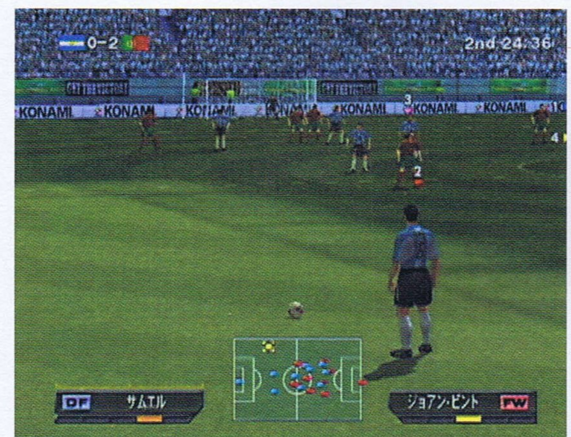
Supposedly, 56 blocks are required to save your game, rising to 163 if you save the various custom teams, replays, tournaments and so on. But it doesn't seem to work on a Memory Card 59, even at the most basic setting. The box quotes 98 blocks minimum, so you'll need a Memory Card 251.

DID YOU KNOW? *Winning Eleven* works just fine on a UK Gamecube via Freeloader, but make sure you've got version 1.06 or better. It plays in slow-motion with messed-up colours on Freeloader 1.04.

"Nintendo should bundle this with new Gamecubes"

THE GAME OF CHAMPIONS

Just six of the many, many things *Winning Eleven* does better than any other soccer sim.



FOUR PLAYERS

You wouldn't think it would be all that great, what with having to guess which player you're going to switch to, but it's very well done. Shame the eight-player multitap mode from the PS2 version couldn't be included.



REALISM

Random collisions between players, dodgy bounces, and the spin of the ball are all taken into account. A harmless shot can easily clip off a defender's heel and loop over the keeper for an own goal.



SET PIECES

Free kicks need to be handled with a subtle touch. There are plenty of button combinations to make the ball loop, skid along the ground, or fly straight and fast. Actually scoring with them takes Beckhamesque skill.



ANIMATION

Not that a game this good really needs flashy visuals to make an impression, but there's a wide variety of motion-captured animation. Certainly a good deal more than the European Pro Evolution 2 for PS2.



CONTROL

Almost every move a real international footballer would be capable of is included here, and consequently there's a lot of button combinations to remember. Fortunately the training mode explains them all (in Japanese).



VICTORY

When you beat somebody at Winning Eleven, it isn't because the computer has given you any assistance, or because you got lucky. It's a game of pure skill, and that winning feeling takes some beating.

When defending, you can put a foot in with two degrees of force, or attempt a full-on sliding tackle. If you have a defensive wall in place, you can make it jump, stand firm, or scatter to charge at the kicker. Pressing B will make any available defenders close in on the ball in open play. Pressing Y makes the keeper rush out for a spot of one-on-one play with an oncoming attacker.

There are special skills and evasive moves accessed via the Z-button, and also dotted around the controller as seemingly undocumented extras – pressing shoot and pass, for example, activates a little shimmy move that wasn't explained in the tutorial.

NO PAIN, NO GAIN

If all that sounds needlessly complicated, the feeling of accomplishment when you actually master a new move shows that Konami's developers knew exactly what they were doing. Every move proves useful in many situations, and once you've learned something as devastating as the long-range hoof into the penalty area or the chipped one-two pass, you'll wonder how you ever managed to play without it.

> **"YOU'VE GOT POWERFUL SHOTS, CHIPPED SHOTS, CURLING SHOTS, DUMMIES AND AT LEAST FOUR WAYS TO TAKE A FREE KICK"**

The depth extends to the management and customisation options too. You can mess around with every setting, making subtle changes to the way the game plays, or create entire new teams using an editing mode that's flexible enough to recreate every club strip you could think of. The more popular ones are included by default, but if you have a hankering for 1970s Liverpool or Marco van Basten's AC Milan, half an hour or so in front of the editing screen should be enough to rebuild the team of your dreams. Thanks to Konami's FIFPro licence, the majority of the most famous players are all included, with the bizarre exception of the Dutch national squad – they're all called

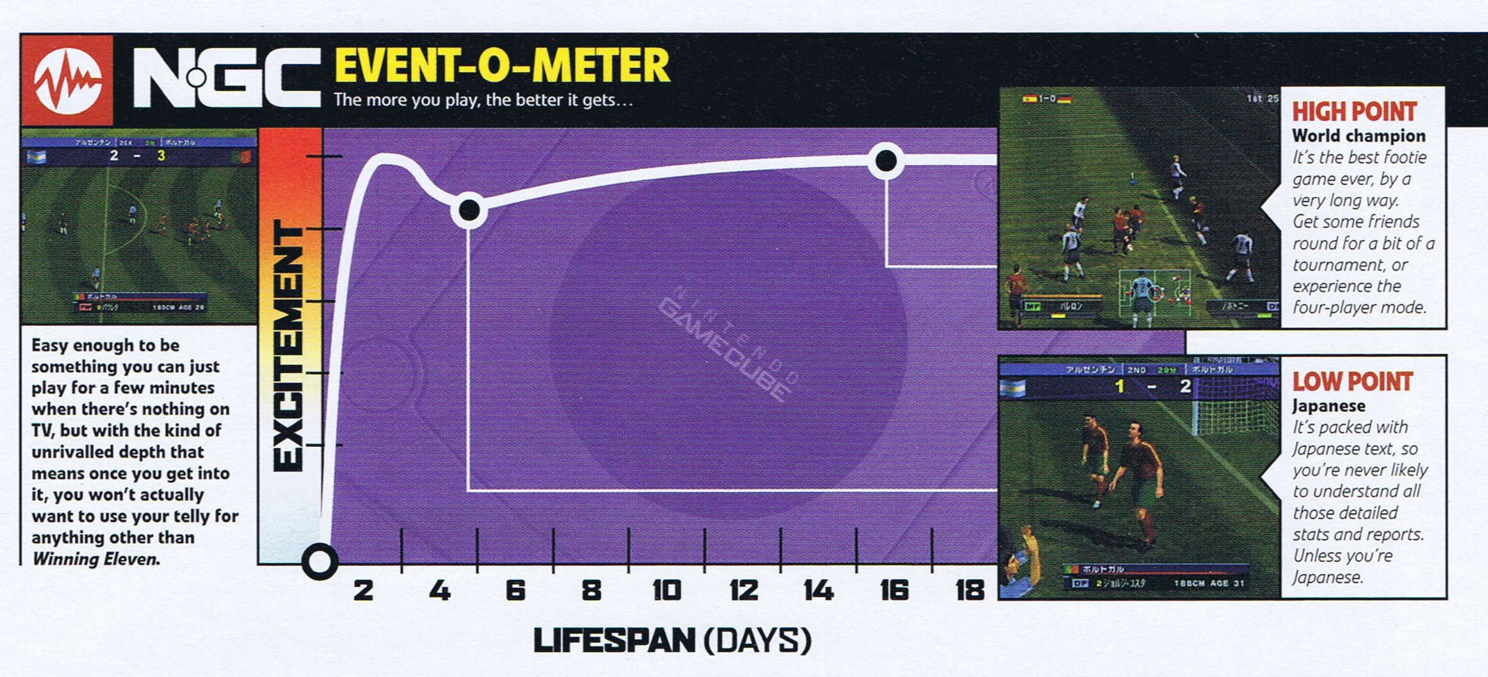


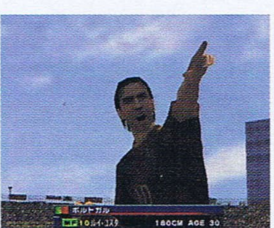
STAT HAPPY

You want stats? Winning Eleven has got more of them than you've ever seen. Players are given an individual rating after each game, and there's even a graphic to show which parts of the pitch they trod on the most. Fascinating stuff, but it's all in Japanese, and some of the stats are just a little bit too obscure to decipher. Bah.

WINNING ELEVEN 6 FINAL EVOLUTION

The world's best football game just got even better on Gamecube











△ You'll see highlights at half-time and after the final whistle, but without Alan Hansen's comments.

Oranges, which should certainly make for some interesting commentary if they ever get around to producing an English version.

Although it works best as a multiplayer game, the Master League option's combination of player-trading and giant-killing will keep solo players busy for weeks. There are also several cup competitions for club sides and national teams, as well as custom tournaments and a novel series of training minigames that will test how well your skills are progressing.

PLAY IT AGAIN

It may well be that you've already played *Pro Evolution 2* for the PS2, in which case you might think the only point in getting this is for the novelty value of seeing it on Gamecube. However, there are a number of changes in this *Final Evolution* edition that make it play a much better all-round game, and according to the many people from various PS2 mags who've popped in to the **NGC** office for a quick match or three, the Gamecube version has nicer graphics. We've noticed an annoying little glitch that makes the screen stutter for no obvious reason, but since it only seems to happens once or twice during the average ten-minute game, it isn't too off-putting.

On the bad side of things, the referees are consistent only in awarding instant red cards for seemingly innocuous incidents, and never, ever playing the advantage. If your player gets fouled but stays on his feet and is certain to recover the ball, the referee will always blow his whistle and award a free kick anyway. *Winning Eleven* is definitely a non-contact sport.

The lack of first-time control shown by many players can mean an attack breaks down simply because your centre-forward is a Heskey rather than a Bergkamp, but then there are plenty of management options to sort out underperforming teams.

The most truly annoying thing is that there appear to be no plans to release the game in Europe. Even PS2 owners won't get it, as the *Final Evolution* editions have always been for Japan only.

Instead we'll get the arcade-style *ISS 3*, which has been delayed by a couple of months and is nowhere near as good as *Winning Eleven*. If Konami won't bring it over here then Nintendo should pay them to publish it, and bundle it with new Gamecubes. It's a system-selling game, and one of the most compelling reasons to invest in a Freeloader disc.

MARTIN KITTS

CELEBRITY CELEBRATIONS

Most players with a recognisable signature celebration, such as the somersaulting Robbie Keane, do the same thing in the game. Using the player creation mode, you can select names and attributes to recreate any of players that aren't included as standard, but celebrations can't be customised.



- Superb controls.
- Infinite replay value.
- High skill level.
- Nice commentary.

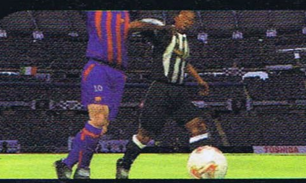


- Picky referees never play the advantage.
- The odd tiny visual hiccup. Nothing much.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…

FIFA 2003
EA
NGC/75 83%
Better crowd sounds and player faces, not such a good game.



8 VISUALS

Solid and smooth, with an incredible array of different animations.



SOUNDS

Japanese commentary beats the English equivalent hands down.



MASTERY

There has never been a smarter, more intuitive football game.



LIFESPAN

Multiplayer mode eats an unhealthy amount of your free time.

VERDICT

It *is* football. Compare it to anything else, even classics like *ISS 64* or *Sensible Soccer*, and you'll see that it's in a league of its own.





FIVE FOR A PRIZE!

Of course, we could easily sit around all day making Top 5 lists, like crazed list-addicted John Cusack. In fact, we often do. But, as ever, we want YOU to do the work now. You've seen the format over the past few months, so send in your own Top 5 lists. If we use yours, you might win something 'interesting'... Good luck, children! Mwahahaha...

NGC ESSENTIAL

THE BEST CUBE GAMES MONEY CAN BUY...

TOP FIVE CUBES

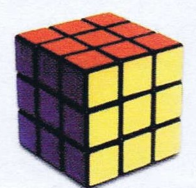
There's only one cube you can play games on, but that doesn't mean there aren't other incarnations of the classic, versatile three-dimensional shape. From **nkharry**, via email...



GAMECUBE



BORG CUBE



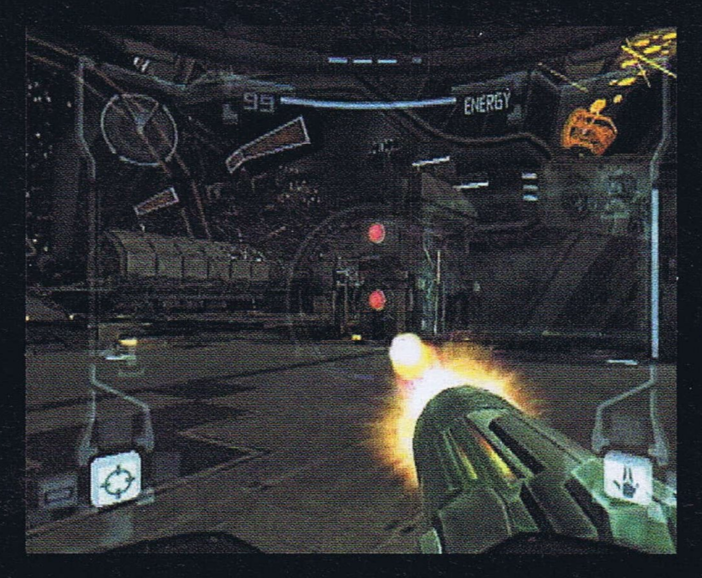
RUBIK'S CUBE



ICE CUBE



SUGAR CUBE



1 METROID PRIME

NINTENDO ■ NGC/79 **97**

If you asked us a year ago where we thought *Metroid Prime* was going to rank on the list, we'd have scoffed cynically. As it turned out, the beleaguered Retro were shoved back on course by the guiding hand of Shigsy to create Gamecube's best game so far. Pushes the envelope in every field to produce a polished, eminently playable, stunningly immersive shooter that will make you cry when it's over. Classic.



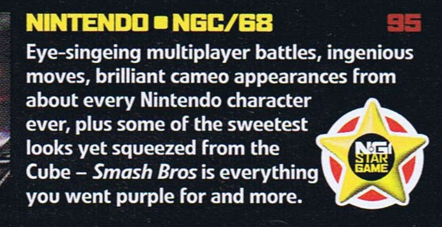
2 SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE



NINTENDO ■ NGC/73 **96**

The wait may have been long, but by Mike was it worth it. This time, Mazza's cleaning up oily muck on a tropical island, put there by an evil villain. With the same intuitiveness, polished visuals, and sense of pure fun, this pushes all the right buttons.

3 SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE



NINTENDO ■ NGC/68 **95**

Eye-singeing multiplayer battles, ingenious moves, brilliant cameo appearances from about every Nintendo character ever, plus some of the sweetest looks yet squeezed from the Cube – *Smash Bros* is everything you went purple for and more.



4 TIMESPLITTERS 2



EIDOS ■ NGC/73 **92**

A stonker of a time-travelling FPS with more than a whiff of *GoldenEye*, *TS2* crept out of nowhere to officially become Gamecube's finest example of the genre – and with *Perfect Dark* destined for the Bill Box, it looks as if it's here to stay.

5 WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM



NINTENDO ■ NGC/67 **91**

In PAL form this sodden sequel might suffer from some *tiny* frame-rate problems, but it's still a fabulous racer, replete with *the* most incredible water effects ever. Fast, dynamic, accessible and sublime to control, *Wave Race* is absolute magic.

6 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE



INFOGRAMES ■ NGC/78 **90**

Essentially *Gauntlet* with lots of numbers and menu screens, *PSO* becomes something entirely different once you plug it into the electric ether: an epic tale of crate-smashing, on-line companionship, and fevered item collection. Geraint loves it.

7 LUIGI'S MANSION



NINTENDO ■ NGC/67 **90**

Mazza might have been late to the party this time around, but brother Luigi managed to ease the pain with this fantastically playable combination of *Super Mario World* and Ghostbusters. It's maybe a bit short, but still ace.

8 RESIDENT EVIL



CAPCOM ■ NGC/72 **89**

The classic zombie-horror fear-fest recreated to take advantage of the Cube's superior electrical witchcraft. Stunning, mesmerising visuals, unrivalled atmosphere and a brilliant storyline. Shame it still has the old-fashioned rotate-and-shoot control system from the dark PSone days, mind...

9 ETERNAL DARKNESS


NINTENDO ■ NGC/74 **89**

A rollicking Lovecraftian yarn of ancient evils coming home to roost that more than gives *Resi* a run for its money. *ED* replaces slick zombie-slaying action with a wonderfully creepy story told through a cast of 12 playable characters, and a truly innovative magic system. Get this one in…

10 SUPER MONKEY BALL




INFOGRAMES ■ NGC/67 **88**

Ingenious update of *Marble Madness*, with simians rolling around strange landscapes trying to collect 'nanas. Chuck in a monkey version of *Mario Kart*, pool, some golf and a tilting boxing ring with springy boxing gloves and you've got the weirdest, most wonderful Gamecube game out.

11 STAR WARS: ROGUE LEADER




ACTIVISION ■ NGC/68 **87**

One of the best-looking console games ever made (well, so far), *Rogue Leader* also happens to be one of the slickest, most memorable Star Wars games of all time, bolting eye-popping renditions of the Battle of Hoth and the Trench Run onto silky-smooth space battles. Get it in now.

12 TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3




ACTIVISION ■ NGC/67 **87**

It's clearly a no-brainer of a PS2 conversion, but *Tony Hawk's 3* is so good it hardly seems to matter. Packed with unbelievable grinds and stunts, backed up by a mountain of hidden extras, and benefiting from vast skate parks, if you haven't tried *Hawk's* on for size before, now's the time.

13 SSX TRICKY




EA SPORTS ■ NGC/69 **87**

Like *Tony Hawk's*, this has got PS2 written all over it in big, fat neon letters, but it still manages to perform wonders with your Cube. Fast, spectacular courses, brilliant shortcuts and secrets and some timely mid-piste scrappage make this conversion brilliant, *brilliant* entertainment.

14 BURNOUT


ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67 **86**

On the N64, we had to wait three years for a driving game. Now we've got a killer racer from day one: with lightning-fast, spectacular crashes, inch-perfect handling and one of the smoothest, most impressive engines around, *Burnout* is a dream of a game, even if it's over a bit quickly.

15 LOST KINGDOMS


ACTIVISION ■ NGC/70 **86**

Nerdy CCG-ing comes to the Cube in this surprisingly accomplished RPG, in which you collect cards and battle mythical monsters in pretty fantasy landscapes. Might not sound like much, but *Lost Kingdoms* is far more than the sum of its parts. Try it and you just might get hooked.

16 PIKMIN




NINTENDO ■ NGC/69 **85**

Dreamily created using textures from Shigsy's own garden, *Pikmin* is a genius real-time strategy with multi-coloured vegetables, beautifully simple controls and expansive, tactile worlds. It's over a bit quickly if truth be told, but don't let that put you off: this is Nintendo brilliance.

17 RESIDENT EVIL ZERO





CAPCOM ■ NGC/78 **85**

Twice the guns, twice the fun? *Resi Zero* ditches the normal one-man-in-a-mansion scenario for a proper two-character system. Some great set-pieces, and it looks lovely, but *Zero* is still just more *Resident Evil* – and if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Well, apart from the rubbish controls. You can fix those.

18 TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 4



ACTIVISION ■ NGC/75 **85**

The world's only skateboarder to be eligible for a Senior Citizen's Railcard (he's 35 this May…) stars in yet another boarding game. No time limits (hurrah!) and some great RPG elements and minigames complement the larger areas – a sterling refinement of an already classic series. Top hole, dude!

19 EXTREME G 3




ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67 **85**

A bit of an underrated gem, *Extreme G 3* offers pulse-shattering speed, huge, sprawling, well-designed tracks, some ingenious – and surprisingly tactical – weaponry and eye-spanking visuals. It's a tiny bit soulless, and the multiplayer's somewhat rank, but this is good stuff.

20 RAYMAN 3: HOODLUM HAVOC


UBI SOFT ■ NGC/78 **84**

A *Rayman* game in the top 20? Well, hello – there must be something in the water. But the French freak has surpassed expectation to deliver… another platform game! Still, they must have perfected the formula by now – it looks great and there are some genuinely innovative link-up games in there.

TOP TEN GBA GAMES



1 ADVANCE WARS
A cute-looking turn-based strategy game it may be, but underneath is a frighteningly addictive, super-challenging masterpiece that'll hook anyone experiencing it. Frankly, one of the best games we've played.

2 SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 2
This slightly tweaked version of the SNES classic boasts a massive game world and some of the tightest, most perfect level designs ever conceived. Stone-cold classic gaming.

3 YOSHI'S ISLAND
Stunning level design, fiendish puzzles and secrets all topped off with some beautiful pastel-shaded visuals. Another essential 2D platformer for GBA.

4 SUPER MARIO KART ADVANCE
Playing very much like the superb SNES original, you have to burn around multi-coloured tracks, dishing out justice with weapons. An excellent multiplayer title.

5 STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3
An incredible conversion of one of the best fighters ever. A massive single-player, a brilliant two-player experience, and a wealth of other great modes. Unmissable.



6 BROKEN SWORD
A perfect handheld title for those long journeys. A gripping storyline, sharp, sarcastic dialogue, some sweet visuals and a more efficient control scheme. A great little adventure.

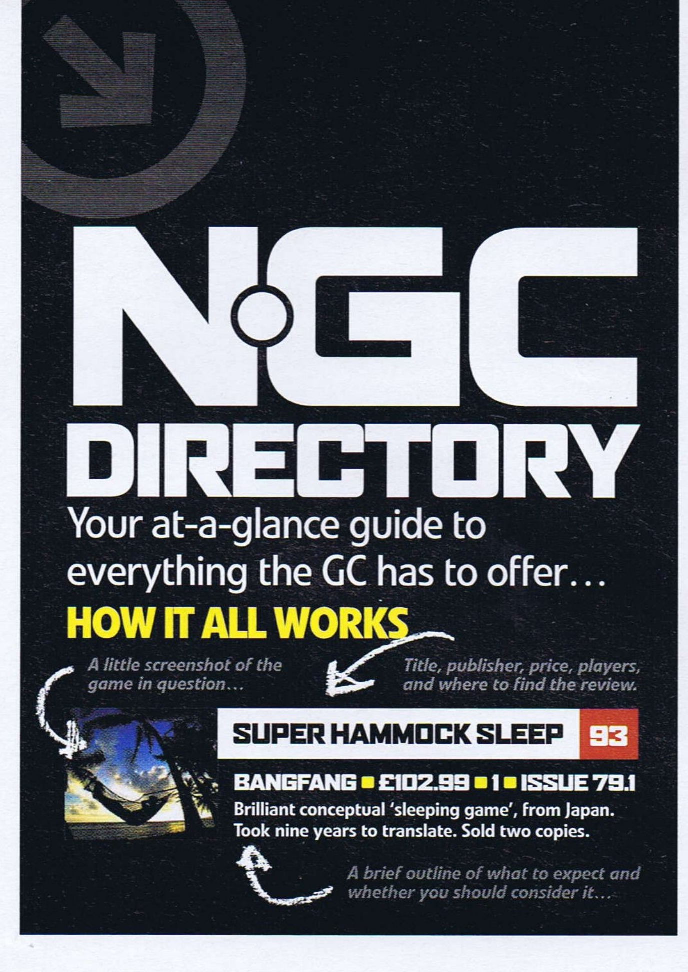
7 CASTLEVANIA HARMONY OF DISSONANCE
A little more accessible than its previous GBA outing, this has all the hallmarks of a classic *'Vania* title. Imaginative bosses, a steep challenge and highly atmospheric.

8 BALLISTIC ECKS VS SEVER 2
Hands down, the best FPS on GBA. An incredible technical achievement (given all the effects), this is both easier on the eye and far more engaging than *Doom*.

9 GRADIUS ADVANCE
The best shooter available for GBA, and it's doubtful many will ever get close. Classic *Gradius* gameplay, with innovative levels and fantastic bosses.



10 GOLDEN SUN
A beautiful little RPG that, while a little clichéd, has a lovely story accompanying some genuinely innovative touches and smart dungeon design.





18 WHEELER AMERICAN PRO TRUCKER — 48

ACCLAIM ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 68
Drive your truck from A to B and avoid 'smokey'. *Out Run* with rigs? The arcade version was better.



2002 FIFA WORLD CUP — 30

EA ■ £35 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 69
About as much fun as being told your parents have been crushed to death in a horrific car crash.



ACE GOLF — 74

EIDOS ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 74
Enjoyable, relaxing sticksie-ball game that treads the middle-ground between fun and serious.



AGGRESSIVE INLINE — 81

ACTIVISION ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 72
Gentle *Tony Hawk's* alterno-clone – this time it's skating around massive arenas, 'busting' tricks.



ATV QUAD POWER RACING 2 — 70

ACCLAIM ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 77
Wave Race on land with bouncy farming vehicles. Competent enough, but there's better out there.



BARBARIAN — 70

VIRGIN ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 72
A button-mashing fantasy battler. Fun for a while – but it's not as good as *Smash Bros.*

TOP FIVE SHOOTERS



TIMESPLITTERS 2
The surprise pinnacle of shooting games – loads of guns, challenges and a meaty single-player, too. Who needs *PD Zero*, eh?



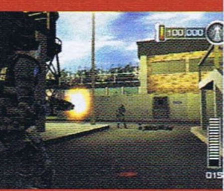
METROID PRIME
"Actually a first-person adventure", according to Geraint. Huh. But that doesn't change the fact that this is one of the best games involving guns ever – on any system.



TUROK EVOLUTION
Bit of a disappointment, but *Turok* is still the man when it comes to serious killage with ridiculously huge weapons.



007 NIGHTFIRE
The better Bond game on Cube. Guns, girls, gadgets, and maybe some other things beginning with G.



DIE HARD VENDETTA
Make terrorists dead US of A-style, with two fistfuls of gun and some real dirty cursing. And an even dirtier vest.



BATMAN VENGEANCE — 70

UBI SOFT ■ £30 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 67
Platforming cartoon bat-action. One of the first Cube games – looking pretty ropey already.



BEACH SPIKERS — 79

INFOGRAMES ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 72
Brilliantly addictive with four players, but the single-player's longevity lets the side down.



BIG AIR FREESTYLE — 28

INFOGRAMES ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 75
The kind of game that makes you want to cry the second you've started playing. Don't bother…



BLOOD OMEN 2: LEGACY OF KAIN — 72

EIDOS ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 77
Gamecube's other undead hack-fest. Evil vampire lord Kain is awake and hungry: breakfast, anyone?



BLOODY ROAR: PRIMAL FURY — 74

ACTIVISION ■ £35 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 68
Competent-enough fighter, but *Capcom Vs SNK* and *Mortal Kombat* have since surpassed it.



BMX XXX — 48

ACCLAIM ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 76
Childish BMX game featuring strippers showing you their nipples. Get a girlfriend instead.



BOMBERMAN GENERATIONS — 70

VIVENDI ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 76
The single-player is enjoyable if a little tedious - four-player mode is as addictive as it ever was.



CAPCOM VS SNK 2 — 79

CAPCOM ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 72
A great game, but purists will want to buy a decent arcade stick to get the most from it…



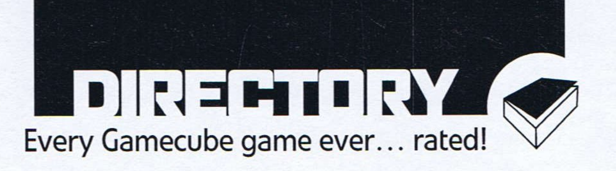
CEL DAMAGE — 60

EA ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 66
Silly cel-shaded car combat game that's far too manic and confusing for its own good.



CRASH BANDICOOT: THE WRATH OF CORTEX — 40

VIVENDI ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 75
One of the worst ports we've seen – of a game that was a stinking load of crap to begin with. Avoid.



Every Gamecube game ever… rated!

TOP FIVE MOST HATED PEOPLE IN GAMES

DAVID GOSEN
Ninty's ubiquitous Public Relations droid is number one on JM's wrath-list. Could be something to do with the banality of evil.

BILL GATES
Is it Bill's Magic Box, or just his mischievous, speccy, come-to-bed eyes? Joseph doesn't say.

THE STAMPER BROTHERS
Rare's treacherous millionaire founders just chortled mockingly in the face of Joseph's waggling finger, snapping their red braces and flicking cigar ash all over the floor.

HIROSHI YAMAUCHI
"Well, his attitude, anyway," says Joseph. Too late, young lad – such weasel words will not save you now. The Eye of Yamauchi draws nearer…

TOM MAYO
"Looks like he's trying to act hard," says Joseph of long-suffering freelance slave and part-time circus bear Mayo. "He ain't."

Joseph Murphy from **County Cork** wins a signed copy of *Sabrina The Teenage Witch: Potion Commotion* for GBA. And the N64 pad we didn't send him ages ago…



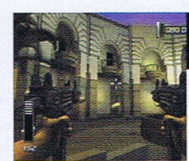
CRAZY TAXI — 70
INFOGRAMES ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 67
Ancient title that's so old it's one of the minigames in *GTAIII*. Creaky graphics, but still good fun.



DARK SUMMIT — 51
THQ ■ £35 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 69
Think *SSX Tricky* but with all the speed, style and entertainment taken out of it. A waste of time.



DAVE MIRRA 2 — 75
ACCLAIM ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 67
Not bad at all. Slick and smooth with big arenas – but this will only appeal to the BMX hardcore.



DIE HARD: VENDETTA — 80
VIVENDI ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 74
Wear a vest and shoot holes in people who look like terrorists. Gamecube's sweariest game.

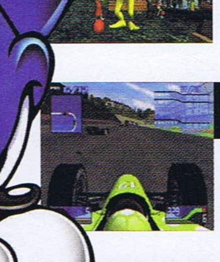


DISNEY SPORTS FOOTBALL — 69
KONAMI ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 76
Oddly enough, this isn't that bad. It's an amusing, simple footie game, ideal for younger gamers.




DONALD DUCK GOIN' QUACKERS — 32
UBI SOFT ■ £30 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 68
A bit like *Crash Bandicoot*, except with a duck in a sailor's costume. Oh, and it's also rubbish.

DOSHIN THE GIANT — 62
NINTENDO ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 74
Quirky title that puts you in charge of a giant who must help indigenous islanders. A little short-lived.



DRIVEN — 60
BAM ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 68
Very basic, very short game of the appalling film. Filling up bargain bins worldwide as we speak.



EGGO MANIA — 49
KEMCO ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 72
Rubbish take on *Tetris* that wouldn't look out of place on an Amiga. Pointless in every way.



ESPN 2002 WINTER SPORTS — 37
KONAMI ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 67
Winter sports game combining button-mashing with timing and precision exercises. Very dull.



F1 2002 — 67
EA ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 71
Rock-hard racing simulator your dad will enjoy. Features German driving robot M Schumacher.



FIFA 2003 — 83
EA ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75
EA finally remember of how good football games are made. Also a vast improvement – finally.



FIREBLADE — 59
MIDWAY ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 77
Nondescript brain-free helicopter game that will appeal to military memorabilia-collecting psychos.



GAUNTLET: DARK LEGACY — 25
MIDWAY ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 68
We'd be far more comfortable with this travesty if we'd had it inserted rectally. Utterly despicable.



GODZILLA: DESTROY ALL MONSTERS MELEE — 68
INFOGRAMES ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 74
Lots of good stompy fun in multiplayer, but otherwise a little weak. Get *Smash Bros* instead.



HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS — 78
EA ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 76
Attractive and decent enough adaptation of the film – but rather easy. Only Potter fans need apply.



HOT WHEELS: VELOCITY X — 45
THQ ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 75
Very basic racing/car-combat game based on the toys. Strictly for the very, very young.



ISS 2 — 83
KONAMI ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 68
A winning formula mystifyingly tarnished with unnecessary additions. Good – but a step back.



JAMES BOND 007: NIGHTFIRE — 72
EA ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75
The best Bond game on GC so far, but tasty visuals can't hide an FPS that's a little lacking overall.



JIMMY NEUTRON: BOY GENIUS — 18
THQ ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 78
Tedious puzzle game ('Y'know – for kids!') that actually manages to out-borify *Universal Studios*.



FASCINATING! Die Hard (the movie) was based on the novel Nothing Lasts Forever by Roderick Thorp, a sequel to the novel The Detective, which was itself made into the 1968 movie of the same name, starring Frank Sinatra. Phew!



Every Gamecube game ever… rated!



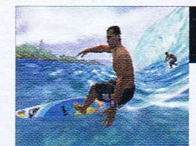
JEDI KNIGHT II — 67

ACTIVISION ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75
A very disappointing PC conversion of an overrated shooter. Huge game, but quite tedious.



JEREMY MCGRATH SUPERCROSS WORLD — 20

ACCLAIM ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 69
Like a horrible nightmare about doing cross-country wearing nothing but wire-wool pants…



KELLY SLATER'S PRO SURFER — 75

ACTIVISION ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 73
Same old trick-based extreme sporting, but this time in water. Actually quite good fun, for a while.



KNOCKOUT KINGS — 79

EA ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 75
If the more arcadey nature of *Rocky* doesn't sit too well with you, then it's worth giving this a go.



LEGENDS OF WRESTLING — 47

ACCLAIM ■ £35 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 69
The gimmick of bringing back old-skool wrestlers is nowhere near enough to make this any good.



LEGENDS OF WRESTLING II — 50

ACCLAIM ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 76
See above. A travesty of a wrestling game, made only marginally better thanks to Big Daddy.



MARIO PARTY 4 — 68

NINTENDO ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75
Disappointing. It's not bad for party fun, but it's done nothing to improve on the originals.



MAT HOFFMAN'S PRO BMX 2 — 70

ACTIVISION ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 75
Another decent enough extreme sports sim. Slicker than *Dave Mirra*, but with smaller, tighter arenas.



MEDAL OF HONOR: FRONTLINE — 74

EA ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75
FPS set during WWII. Looks rather ropey in places, but it's atmospheric and highly enjoyable.



MEN IN BLACK II: ALIEN ESCAPE — 45

INFOGRAMES ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 78
Rubbish off-the-peg shooting game of the rubbish off-the-peg movie. Did we say it was rubbish?



MICRO MACHINES — 57

INFOGRAMES ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 78
Like the recipe for bread, *Micro Machines* doesn't change much, and this one's no exception…



MICKEY'S MAGICAL MIRROR — 26

DISNEY ■ £30 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 73
A cruel form of torture as Mickey patronises his way through this hideous adventure. Rubbish.



MINORITY REPORT — 39

ACTIVISION ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 77
Astonishingly brutal third-rate fighting game that takes place on the sets of a Spielberg movie.



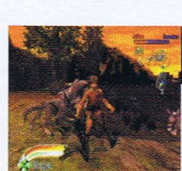
MORTAL KOMBAT: DEADLY ALLIANCE — 80

MIDWAY ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 77
The best *Kombat* yet! The spine-ripping yarn gets the update it deserves on Gamecube. Finish him!



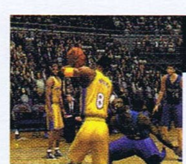
MX SUPERFLY — 63

THQ ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 73
An MX game that handles like you're racing on the moon. The best of a very bad bunch, though.



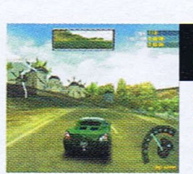
MYSTIC HEROES — 71

THQ ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75
Simplistic, repetitive 3D *Gauntlet*-style slash-'em-up that's strangely entertaining and charming.



NBA LIVE 2003 — 70

EA ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75
The best basketball sim available, but it's still lacking somewhat. Strictly for fans only.



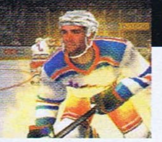
NEED FOR SPEED 2 — 69

EA ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 74
Slow and sluggish. Yet another lazy port that's ruined what was originally very entertaining.



NHL 2003 — 64

EA ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75
A more realistic approach to ice hockey which, while decent enough, isn't particularly fast or fun.



NHL HITZ 20-03 — 65

MIDWAY ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 74
More frantic than EA's effort and a lot better for it. Not much change from the original, though.

JUD'S TOP FIVE GUNS



"88"
"A German anti-aircraft gun that was also good at killing tanks. I like to use mine to clear annoying police roadblocks"



BROWNING 9MM
"This one has a 13-round magazine. That's 13 little pieces of death to fill a crack dealer with. A Baker's Dozen – of lead, if you will."



MG42
"Shoot holes in walls from over a mile away! I recently added 'ventilation holes' in my T72 with one. It gets quite hot in there during the summer months."

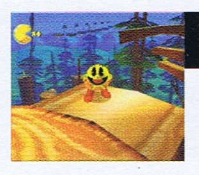


MP40 "SCHMEISSER"
"Simply, a stunningly high rate of fire. Tears through meat and bone in seconds. I like shooting mine into the air a lot."



STEN GUN
"The Sten only cost about £1.95 to build. We could covermount them for that price. Crap build quality, though. Rather like our covermounts, come to think of it."





PAC-MAN WORLD 2 — 70

EA ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 78

The Pac is back for hilarious platforming fun. Shamelessly pilfers everything from *Mario 64*.



PRO RALLY 2002 — 58

UBI SOFT ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 74

An okay game completely dragged down by its awful, frustrating handling. Leave well alone.



PRO TENNIS WTA TOUR — 48

KONAMI ■ £35 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 74

As bland an experience as you could get, with unresponsive controls and po-faced women. Dull.



RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP — 74

SCI ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 78

Surprisingly soild, does nearly all the things a rallying game should. Whither Colin McRae now?



RED CARD 20-03 — 78

MIDWAY ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 71

Violent football game where you mince opponents until the meat shows, Roy Keane-style.



REIGN OF FIRE — 59

BAM ■ £35 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 76

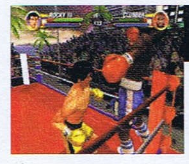
A poor game of a bad film. Some nice ideas are ruined by dodgy in-game physics and controls.



ROBOTECH: BATTLECRY — 77

TDK ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 77

Stompy king-size robots go to war in the game of the crazy Japanese cartoon. Not bad at all.



ROCKY — 78

RAGE ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 74

A solid fighter based on the movies. With a great two-player and unlockable extras, it's a real treat.



SCOOBY DOO: NIGHT OF 100 FRIGHTS! — 36

THQ ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 75

Generic platforming action that has nothing to hold your interest longer than half an hour. Pointless.



THE SCORPION KING — 30

VIVENDI ■ £35 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 75

Bad. Very bad. Guide a poor approximation of The Rock around and hit bad guys over and over.



TOP FIVE 17TH CENTURY POETS CALLED JOHN

JOHN DONNE
(1572-1631)
Wrote complex, thinky 'metaphysical' poems no-one understood. Gets top spot for being a poet, Dean of St Pauls, *and* a raging sex fiend, all at the same time. Not bad.

JOHN MILTON
(1608-1674)
The proto David Blunkett. Crazy blind bible-basher who wrote Paradise Lost, a poetic soap opera starring Satan. Was "of the Devil's party and did not know it," according to William Blake.

JOHN WILMOT, SECOND EARL OF ROCHESTER
(1647-1680)
Not a great poet, but brilliant at swearing, drinking heavily, 'carousing' and wearing an enormous, towering periwig. Also wrote unbelievably rude verse.

JOHN DRYDEN
(1631-1700)
Rather boring 17th century poet called John, whose major distinction was being the first Poet Laureate, which entailed writing naughty limericks for Charles II now and again. Also wrote plays.

SIR JOHN SUCKLING
(1609-1642)
Foppish aristocrat who wrote rubbish poetry like most other foppish aristocrats of the day. Also the author of The Goblins, a play.

Daniel Geary BA MPhil Cambs (2.ii) from Norn Iron wins a copy of The Norton Anthology of Poetry.



SEGA SOCCER SLAM — 67

INFOGRAMES ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 74

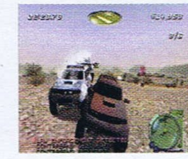
Footie with a focus on violence and OTT moves. Cracking in multiplayer – poor on your own.



THE SIMPSONS: ROAD RAGE — 52

EA ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 68

A bad *Crazy Taxi* clone with nothing more going for it than repetitive 'funny' one-liners.



SMUGGLER'S RUN — 78

ROCKSTAR ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 73

impressive landscapes and fast-paced 'racing' are let down by repetitive gameplay and awful music.



SONIC ADVENTURE 2: BATTLE — 70

INFOGRAMES ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 67

Sega's annoying mascot on Gamecube, now with an extra dimension. Does anyone care anymore?



SPIDER-MAN: THE MOVIE — 72

ACTIVISION ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 69

Dodgy control and camera issues are the only problems with this enjoyable platform adventure.



SPY HUNTER — 55

MIDWAY ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 68

Appalling frame-rate, nasty course design and dull linear racing make this one to avoid at all costs.



SPYRO: ENTER THE DRAGONFLY — 40

VIVENDI ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 75

Much like *Crash*, this is another shoddy port of a game that wasn't much fun in the first place.





DIRECTORY

Every Gamecube game ever… rated!



SUPER MONKEY BALL 2 — 82

SEGA ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 79

The apes are back with even harder levels and a crazy new story mode involving banana-theft.



STARFOX ADVENTURES — 72

NINTENDO ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 74

Disappointing adventure that's way too easy and linear. Not awful, but should have been far better.



STAR WARS: BOUNTY HUNTER — 68

ACTIVISION ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 77

The panting, pot-bellied hired gun gets the *Tomb Raider* treatment in this distinctly average game.



STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS — 71

ACTIVISION ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75

Enjoyable blaster set around Episode II – not as good as *Rogue Leader*, but still fun all the same.



THE SUM OF ALL FEARS — 25

UBI SOFT ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 76

The most technically inept game we've ever had the misfortune to play.



SUPER BUBBLE POP — 65

JALECO ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 78

Kind of *Tetris*-y flavoured *Bust-a-Move* with chemically-induced visuals and music. Wick.



TARZAN FREERIDE — 59

UBI SOFT ■ £35 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 67

Disney. Platformer. Do we really need to say any more? Workaday, unimaginative gameplay.



TAZ WANTED — 52

INFOGRAMES ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 72

Some of the worst level design we've ever seen in this middling, frustrating cel-shaded platformer.



TETRIS WORLDS — 38

THQ ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 73

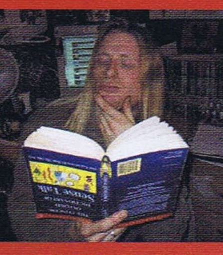
Again, THQ manage to ruin one of the best games ever by trying to make it 'better'. Get *Tetris DX*.



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2003 — 82

EA ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75

The world #1 golf robot gets his own game. Actually really good, in a sort of arcadey way.



MORE OF PAUL'S SENSE TALKS

GETTING DRESSED
"Just got out of the bath? Damp feet produce less friction on the inside of your jeans if you put your socks on first."

CAR MAINTENANCE
"If your car develops an unfamiliar noise that bothers you, wait a week or two… then it's a familiar one. Job done!"

DESK CLEANING
"If your desk gets covered with stray hairs and dust, replace your mouse ball with a half-sucked gobstopper. This way you can clean your desk and play *Quake III* at the same time."

DOORS
"Some doors are best left shut."

DIRTY DOGS
"If you ever find yourself in a park with a muddy Red Setter bounding towards you, don't bother running. You're going to get mudded up – it's as good as done."



TOP GUN: COMBAT ZONES — 71

VIRGIN ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 72

The only game of its kind on GC so far. It's pretty challenging, but we recommend you try it first.



TUROK EVOLUTION — 71

ACCLAIM ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 73

Rather disappointing dino-hunting FPS sequel. Okay, but serious niggles let the series down badly.



TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER — 60

EA ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 76

As mediocre a platformer as you'll find. It's a solid example of the genre but nothing more or less.



UNIVERSAL STUDIOS — 24

KEMCO ■ £30 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 67

Awful. Anyone who makes a game that has you picking up rubbish deserves to be shot in the face.



VIRTUA STRIKER 3 V2002 — 55

INFOGRAMES ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 69

Nice to look at, horrible to play. Rubbish AI and unwieldy controls make for a crap game of footie.



WORMS BLAST — 63

UBI SOFT ■ £35 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 74

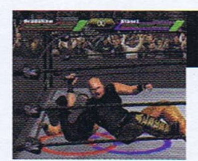
Kinda like *Bust-a-Move* in a puzzly-action kind of way, except this isn't anywhere near as good.



WRECKLESS: THE YAKUZA MISSIONS — 51

ACTIVISION ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 75

Drive around like a lunatic and smash up cars and everything else that gets in your way. Nonsense.



WWE X8 — 70

THQ ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 72

Okay wrestler, but with nothing particularly new and a way-too-familiar engine. Still, if you must…



X-MEN: NEXT DIMENSION — 55

ACTIVISION ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75

Duller than dishwater. Fighting-by-numbers stuff that offers very little of interest.



ZOOCUBE — 50

ACCLAIM ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 71

Insane puzzle game involving a rotating cube that sucks in orbiting animal parts and goes 'moo'.

GEAR

More barely-useful tat and trinkets thrown into the mix with some genuinely pleasing gaming peripherals…



WHAT IS A BEST BUY?

Every month we'll pick out one piece of kit that stands head and shoulders above the rest and award it our coveted Best Buy badge. A Best Buy will combine superb quality with fantastic value for money – when we hand something a reward like that, you know it's worth investing in.

NGC BEST BUY

FREELOADER

FROM DATEL ● £19.99 ● TEL 01785 810800

It's a miracle, we say. It's a bleedin' MIRACLE! The Freeloader has been delayed for so long and on so many occasions that we were beginning to wonder whether or not the damn thing existed – but it's here now, and guess what? The damn thing is as unreliable as its initial release date. Okay that's not entirely true, but we are getting mixed results with import games on PAL Gamecubes.

In order to get your import games working, you need to insert the Freeloader and boot it up in one of three different ways (see the explanation below). Once you've done that, you'll be prompted to insert your import game disc. If that doesn't work, try again using one of the different booting methods until it does. Once you've got it up and running, play away. It's that simple.

Well, in theory anyway. The thing is, there were a number of games that wouldn't work properly. *Resident Evil Zero* and *Winning Eleven 6* (reviewed on page 66) are two examples of this – they both ran, but with jerky, slow-motion graphics and messed-up colour and sound.

But just as we were going to brand Freeloader a pile of old dreck, another copy turned in the post. We tried it, and… everything worked just fine! Why? Well, it's a slightly updated version. If you look on the back of the disc, around the centre you'll find the words "Freeloader – Version 1.06". This is the version that works properly – the earlier version 1.04 doesn't seem to function with certain games. So, definitely pick one up, but take our advice. When the shop assistant hands it over to you, open it up and check the back of the disc. If it has Version 1.04 on the underside, give it back him and demand he give you one that will actually work properly…

NGC BEST BUY

BETTER THAN…



MODDED IMPORT CUBE

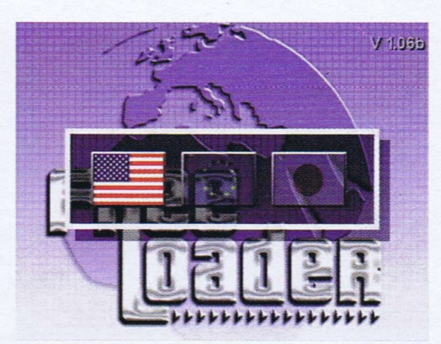
FROM IMPORTED ● £150-£200

So far we have yet to come across any problems using the newer version of Freeloader. If this trend continues, £19.99 is certainly a lot better deal than an imported Gamecube, and it effectively does the same job.

METHOD 1 Simple. Just crack the lid of your Gamecube open and stick the disc in. Turn on your Gamecube, and wait for it to load up. You'll then be prompted to put your import game in. Shortly after, your game (should) boot up automatically.



METHOD 2 If your game doesn't load up properly with the first method, turn your Gamecube off, take the disc out, and boot it up with an empty tray. Now put your Freeloader in, and load it up from the GC's Gameplay menu.



METHOD 3 This boot-up method works in much the same way as the first. Put the disc into your machine and power it up. Only this time, hold down the Z-button when this region menu pops up. Select your region, and insert your game.

SOUND SYSTEM 5.1

FROM THRUSTMASTER ● £149.99 ● NET WWW.THRUSTMASTER.CO.UK

For this money, there really isn't any point in 5.1 Gamecube speakers. Okay, they sound good… on Xbox or PS2, as both consoles support Dolby Digital (although PS2 doesn't actually output this from any games, only DVDs). Gamecube doesn't support Dolby Digital at all, though – so effectively, you'll only be getting four-channel sound from these. If the setup supported Dolby Pro Logic 2, of course, that would be a different matter – but it doesn't, which means if you want speakers for your Cube, you might want to steer clear of these. Maybe you could put the money towards setting up a proper, slightly pricier, but better-quality sound system…

NOT AS GOOD AS…

SEPARATES
FROM ANY GOOD HI-FI STORE ● £200-£2,000

A sound setup that you've constructed yourself. We don't mean actually making the units themselves of course, but in our book, there really is no substitute for saving a bit of cash and getting a separate amp and speakers. Quality hi-fi merchandise can be bought for very reasonable prices these days, you know…

FLIGHT STICK

FROM LOGIC 3 ● £19.99 ● TEL 0208 902 2211

If you're serious about buying a flight stick, then you might as well get yourself a proper one. Not that Logic 3's effort couldn't be better – it feels far too plasticky for one thing. The stick itself doesn't provide particularly smooth movement, which makes accurate aiming particularly bothersome. But the final nail in the coffin, of course, is the fact that there isn't really anything you can use it with yet. *Top Gun*, maybe, but it's such a hard game already that this stick just makes it even tougher. And as for *Rogue Leader*? You might as well stick to the joypad…

SAME AS…

FLIGHT STICK
FROM 4GAMERS ● £19.99

Again, similar quality, and again, not really worth your while until old-man's game *Microsoft Flight Simulator 2010* comes out on Gamecube, which will be, er… never.

STARTER PACK FOR GAMECUBE

FROM LOGIC3 ● £19.99 ● TEL 020 8902 2211

A famous philosopher once said: "touch me, touch me, I want to feel your body". The joypad in this starter pack feels nice in a tactile, rubbery way, while the disc box has a nifty soft-eject lid action – but that doesn't mean these products are that good. The pad is reasonable compared to some of the rubbish we've seen, and the rest of the items (the memory card and extension lead) are functional. But if Logic3 had put their excellent Pro Pad in here instead of the perverted rubber one (we haven't been able to stop sniffing it since it arrived), this would definitely have been worth a look.

NOT AS GOOD AS…

PRO PAD
FROM LOGIC 3 ● £14.99

This is the best third-party pad available, as we've said before. The rest of the stuff isn't really necessary (apart from the memory card), so if you must have a cheaper pad, the Pro Pad is the one to go for.

NGC ESSENTIALS



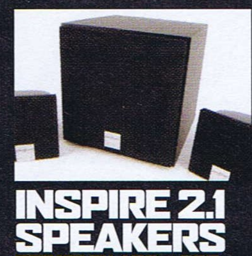
5.6" TFT MONITOR
JOYTECH ● £99

The sharpest, cheapest, biggest and best screen around so far. Absolutely no contest whatsoever (not that there's much).



PRO PAD
LOGIC3 ● £14.99

Still the best third-party controller around – we'll be surprised if anyone beats it. It's sturdy, the analogue is almost perfect, and it's comfortable to hold. Lovely.



INSPIRE 2.1 SPEAKERS
CREATIVE LABS ● £35

After much deliberation, we figured that while they're not quite as good on the sound-quality front as Altec Lansing's speakers, at half the price, these offer better value.



WILLIAMS F1 RACING WHEEL
JOYTECH ● £44.99

Amazing. Not too pricey and leagues ahead of the competition. This little baby actually makes driving games even more fun than before. An essential purchase.

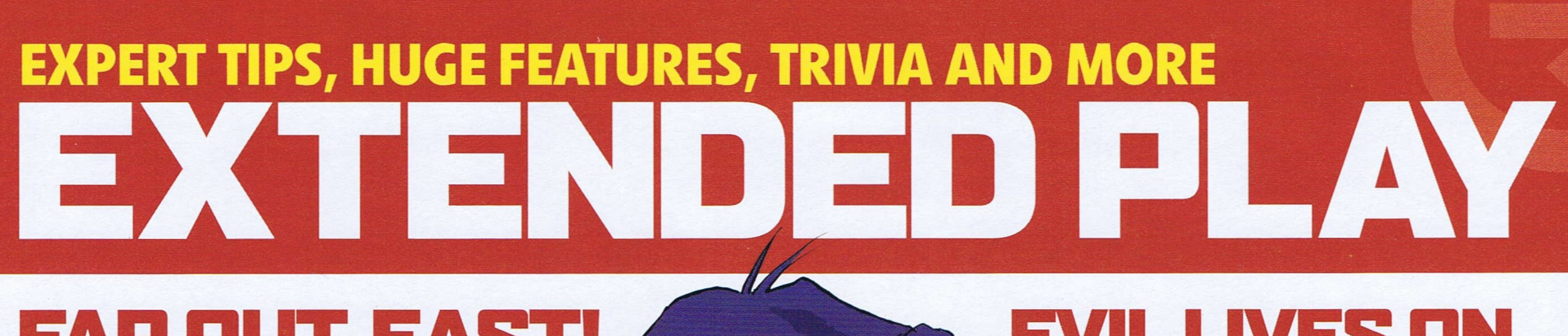


AFTER-BURNER
TRITON LABS ● £35

Most GBA lights don't require sawing, gluing and soldering to install, but once fitted there's no better lighting alternative to this.



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JAPANESE DREAM SUPER NEWS

Our man in Japan gives us an emotionally charged account of the madness out there. P108

EVIL LIVES ON



RESIDENT EVIL ZERO

Master the prequel to this survival-horror series in part two of our massive guide. P82

I'M THE BEST

Show us proof of your star quality and we promise to immortalise you in print for… a few weeks. P96

COMPENDIUM

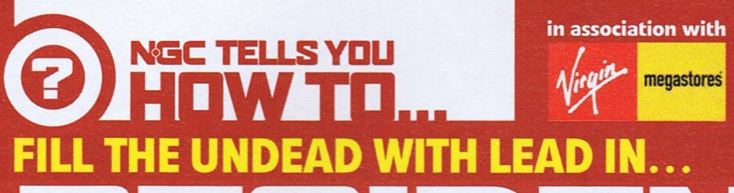
Learn enough rudimentary Japanese to play the games. But probably not pull the women. P106

PLUS!

TIPS EXTRA

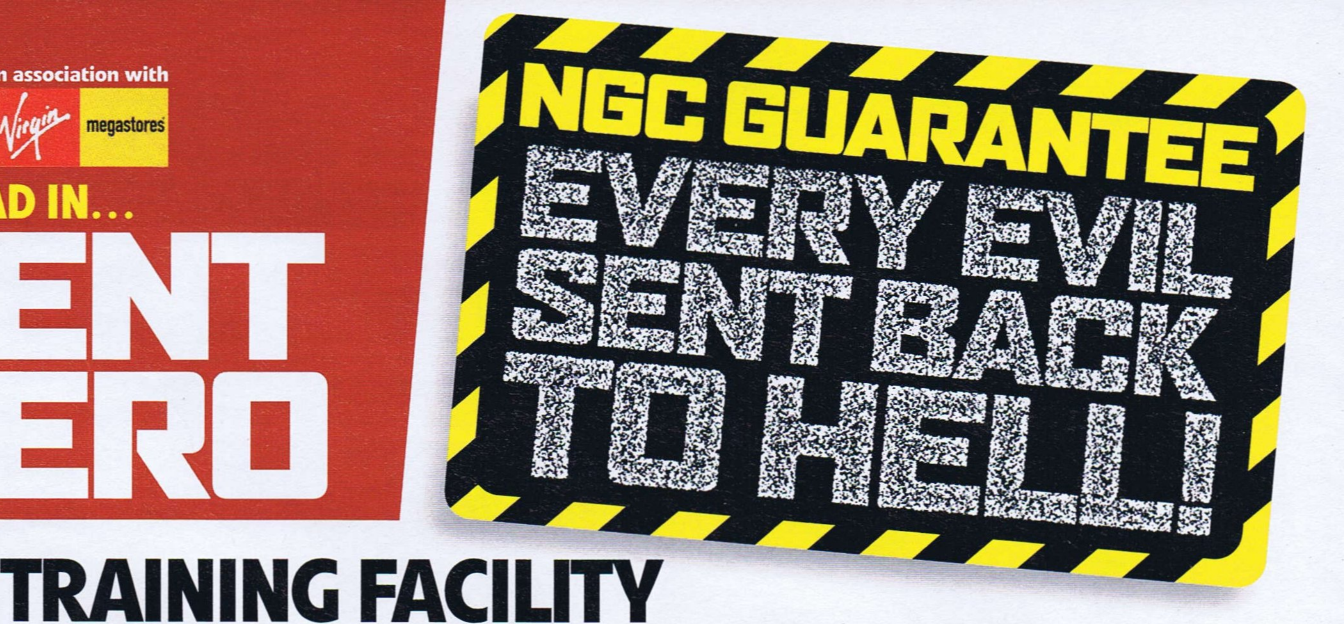
Juicy tips for your gaming pleasure: *LOTR: Two Towers, Resident Evil Zero, Winning Eleven 6 Final Evolution*, and *Blood Rayne*… P92

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FILL THE UNDEAD WITH LEAD IN...

RESIDENT EVIL ZERO

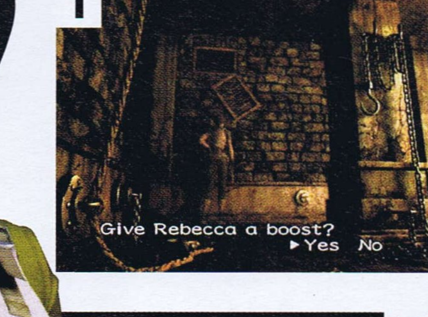


WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Zombies say hello! The prequel to the survival horror series where deadly viruses bring out the malevolent side of your everyday rotting corpse, *Resi Zero* is also a departure in that you can play as both characters at the same time. Other than that, it's more or less about shooting shambling munters in the head until the white... meat... shows...

NORMAL MODE

TRAINING FACILITY

1


2


PUZZLE! POWER REGULATOR

Each of the five switches on the console will decrease or increase the available voltage by a set amount. However, that amount is randomly selected from game to game. Your target number, which is thoughtfully labelled on the meter, is 70 volts. To solve this puzzle, hit the switches and take note of how much they increase or decrease the available voltage. The first switch will not decrease the voltage below zero, but, when the voltage does increase, will instead deduct from the total.



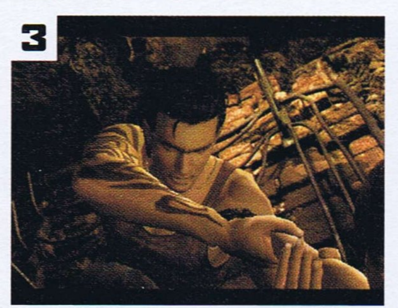
IN TIPS LAST MONTH...

You may recall that last issue we left Rebecca and Billy hanging around in a corridor outside the observation room. Well, you'll find a murky prison cell attached to that room. Give Rebecca a boost through a helpfully uncovered vent **(1)**, and into the torture chamber next door. Aside from the picturesque design (by Torquemada?), there are precisely two things of any use here: the About the Power Regulator file, abandoned near the locked exit, and the power regulator itself. Solving this puzzle will unlock the door to this room, the side door in the secret passageway outside, and stop the steam jet in the boiler room.

Rebecca's success will, sadly, also cause our nightgowned friend to unleash a pack of the vicious Eliminators from elsewhere in the facility. When the parade of cut-scenes and movies ceases, you'll be in control of Billy, who must rescue Rebecca before she falls to her death **(2)**. Don't worry too much about a time limit, though – Rebecca belongs to the Rinoa Heartilly school of damsels in distress, and will cling to her perch like a lamprey until you get around to saving her.

This might be the trickiest part of the game, especially if you don't know what you're doing. To save Rebecca, turn around and leave the basement. You'll find that a pair of Eliminators have moved into the observation room; run right past them. If you're running low on ammunition, the monitor room – in the spiders' hallway – is now unlocked and populated by a single zombie. (He has a friend, but that friend is a rare "sleeper" zombie, and will not bother you unless you allow him to nosh on Billy's leg.) The monitor room holds three boxes of handgun bullets, a gas tank, and a box of shotgun shells.

From the basement, go through the dining room (where the dead man slumped against the sink will reanimate), into the boiler room (where two green herbs, a red herb, and a blue herb await your dining pleasure), then downstairs. You'll find a large room featuring a ring of statues, where three Eliminators are on the prowl. Dispatch them if you see fit – we usually do – and find the room that was indicated on your map. Billy will rescue Rebecca just in the nick

3


4




WHAT WE SAID IN ISSUE 76!

"Resident Evil Zero is a genuinely great game, but while it's introduced an excellent new two-character system, it's eliminated very few of the obvious flaws that have haunted the series. But you won't regret buying it."

NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING
86

RESIDENT EVIL ZERO

Make the dead even deader in part two of our tips spectacular…

MONSTER! ELIMINATOR

A clawed baboon with supernatural agility, an Eliminator's single weakness is its slow speed. If you let it begin its preferred combat routine of jumping onto your back, ricocheting off walls to get to your back, and carving your ankles into scrimshaw, it can be very hard to stop… and there are usually at least two of them.

You're better off evading Eliminators whenever possible, by outrunning them and getting to the closest door. If you decide to kill a pack of them, it's best done with the shotgun or grenade launcher; weaker weapons just make them mad. Just keep using auto-aim to track the Eliminators, and knock them down as fast as they get up.





5



6

of time **(3, 4)**. After a long, exposition-laden series of movies and cut-scenes, you'll find yourself in a save room, complete with an ink ribbon.

Now that the Eliminators are here, they've decided they're moving in. There are now killer monkeys in the torture chamber in the basement, and in the northeast hall, southwest hall, and exterior balcony on the second floor. This shouldn't create any problem, but bear it in mind. Nothing will ruin your day faster than absent-mindedly wandering into a hall and getting a face full of mutant baboon.

As long as you're here, you may as well explore the second and third sub-basements. This floor also features a slightly complicated animal puzzle…

Solve the puzzle and the iron gate opens – it barred your entrance to a sleeping area. The side door leads to a single bedroom, where you'll find a trio of empty bottles on a desk, and the Unity Tablet in the fireplace **(5)**. The end door is the entrance to a small barracks full of zombies, but the only reason you want to go in there at all is to pick up the Management Trainee's Diary file. No one will think ill of you if you duck into the room, swipe the file, and run right back outside without a fight. Really.

GOING UNDERGROUND…

At this point, it's an excellent idea to have the grenade launcher with you, or at least the shotgun. Furthermore, you'll want to grab some items that cure poison.

The third sub-basement is a bit more fun. When you first enter it, you'll find a flight of metal stairs leading straight down into the lair of another trio of spiders **(6)**. These guys are even easier to dodge than their cousins in the first sub-basement, since they tend to hang out on the walls and ceiling.

Your goal in the third sub-basement is to reach the end of the spiders' hallway, but there's a short, optional detour here. There's a side door in the hall, through which you'll find a small room that overlooks the facility's underground river. Slaughter a pair of inattentive cockroaches, and you'll find a Locker Key **(7)**.

The spiders' hallway leads to the facility's testing area and armoury. Head upstairs upon entry to find two boxes of handgun bullets, a box of shotgun shells, and a single Magnum bullet under the counter. If you bothered to grab the locker key, it'll open the large metal… locker… here, where you'll find a duralumin case. Flip the case over with the Examine command to discover its combination – 385 – so you can open it **(8)**. Inside are the handgun parts, which you can combine with either Billy or Rebecca's handgun to create the surprisingly effective Custom Handgun.

From the armoury, you'll see something gleaming down in the maze, and as we all know by now, 'shiny' equals 'treasure.' Equip Billy with the grenade launcher, if available, or the shotgun, and send him into the maze, alone. Rebecca, from the booth, can use the buttons on the console to raise and lower the iron grates in his path.

First, press the L-button on the panel. As Billy, head down a screen so you can grab a case of acid rounds from the floor, then go back around to the top of the maze. When he reaches a grate, switch to Rebecca and press the centre button, then run Billy past the newly lowered grate and press the R-button. Billy should have fetched up next to a red button on the wall of the maze. Push it to retract the grates in the wall, thus granting you access to the shiny thing, as



7

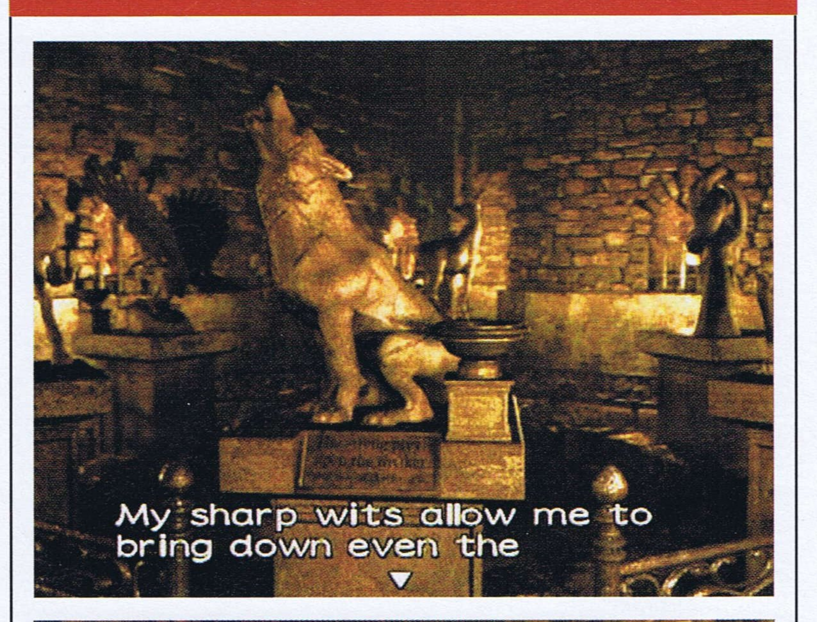


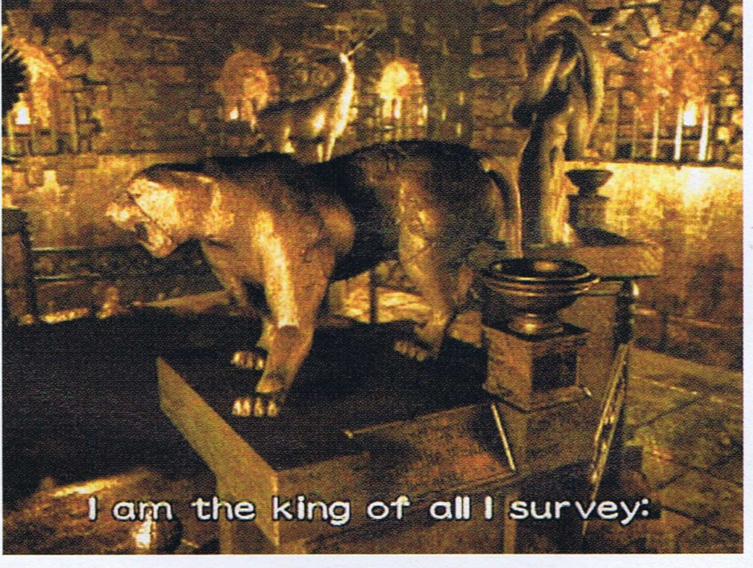
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PUZZLE! PREDATORS AND PREY

You passed a ring of statues en-route to save Rebecca, each of which features a cryptic inscription and an unlit torch. There's a wrought-iron gate behind the statues, and if you light the statues' torches in the correct order, using Billy's lighter, the gate will open.

The animals on the statues form their own little food chain – you have to light the torches in order, from the first animal to die to the last. Each of the statues' inscriptions holds a key to that animal's killer, and frequently, to its prey. The correct sequence is: deer, wolf, horse, lion, snake, eagle.



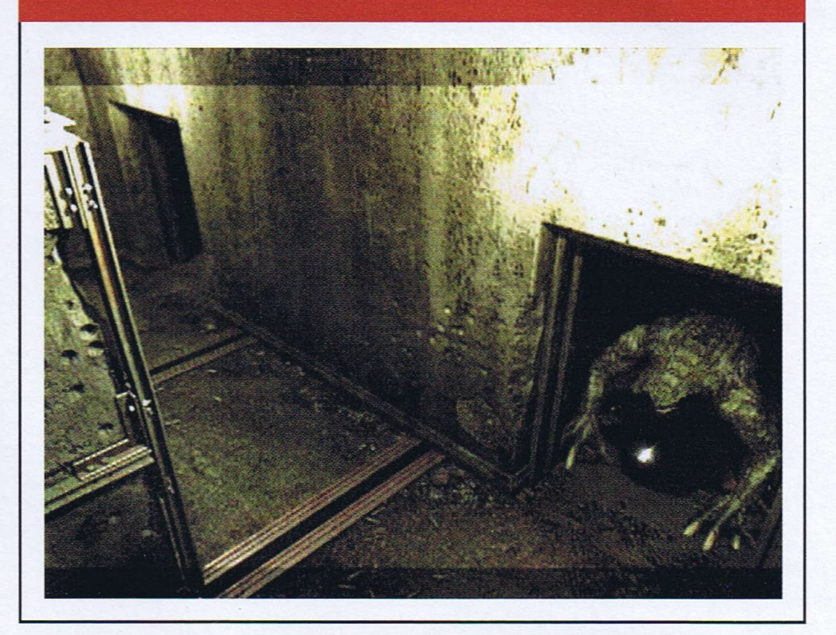






MONSTER! HUNTERS

These Hunters are a far cry from the engines of destruction they've been in past Resident Evil *games. While they still attack in their time-honoured manner – claw rakes and leaping slashes that inflict enormous damage – they've lost their instant-kill flying decapitation and they're painfully easy to outrun or outmanoeuvre. They've gained a certain degree of resilience to compensate, as they can sometimes wade right through a shotgun blast, and they've refined their claw swipes into a devastating one-two combination. The best tactic against a Hunter is, quite frankly, to kill it as fast as you possibly can, with whatever you can. Most often, that'll involve three or four shotgun blasts, one or two acid rounds, or a single Magnum bullet.*



well as triggering a fight with a pair of curious Hunters… The shiny thing in question turns out to be a second Facility Key, this one bearing a water-like inscription. The Water Key only works on one door in the facility – that of the art room, so go check it out.

VICE SQUAD

The final area of the Training Facility isn't particularly dangerous, but it has a lot of items you'll want, so be sure you have the inventory space for it. Bring the Custom Handgun and a few Molotovs.

There's a leech creature waiting in ambush as you step through the 'water door' in the art room. On this stretch of hallway, you'll find the facility's monitor room and bar. The former room's easy; a single leech creature is guarding a vice handle. It's easiest to send an unarmed Rebecca in here; she's fast enough to get in there, get the handle, and leave the room before the leech creature's in any position to attack.

The bar's a little more complicated, and you'll need both of your characters. Have Billy play the piano **(9)** to open a secret wine cellar. Send Rebecca inside to get a box of Magnum bullets, three empty bottles, and a battery. Taking the latter item will shut the door to the cellar again, but Billy can play the piano again to let Rebecca out.

Finally, the last stretch of the hall features a pair of work areas. One is a botany lab, and contains two green herbs, a first-aid spray, a box of handgun bullets, and some discarded empty bottles. The other is a workshop where a pair of zombies roam; here, use the vice handle on the vice in the corner to free the trapped Obedience Tablet **(10)**, and stock up on shotgun shells from the box in the bookcase.

Thus equipped, return to the front hall and go straight out the front door. There's a stopped elevator here with a missing battery **(11)**; you may now remedy that situation. Lower the lift, and you'll find a handy, shoveable crate. Switch over to Billy and shove the crate to one of the broken columns **(12)** to reach the shiny thing on top – the Discipline Tablet **(13)**.

A quartet of cockroaches have decided to move into the feeding room while you've been busy elsewhere, blocking your access to the observatory. But if you stand at the top of the stairs none of the cockroaches will be able to reach you. Fire at will.

Make a last run through the Training Facility, to move all of your extra inventory items from the front hall to the observatory. Once you put all three tablets into place, it's time to journey to a faraway, mystical land… called Disc 2.

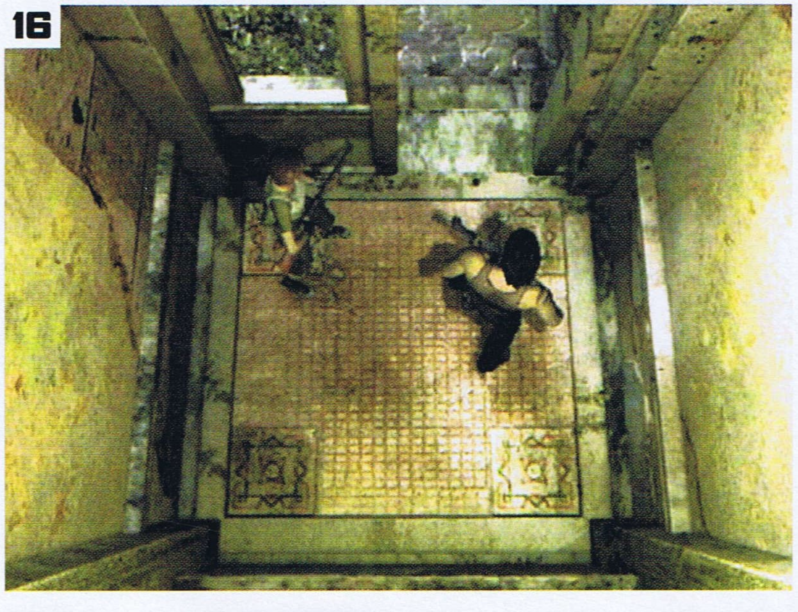




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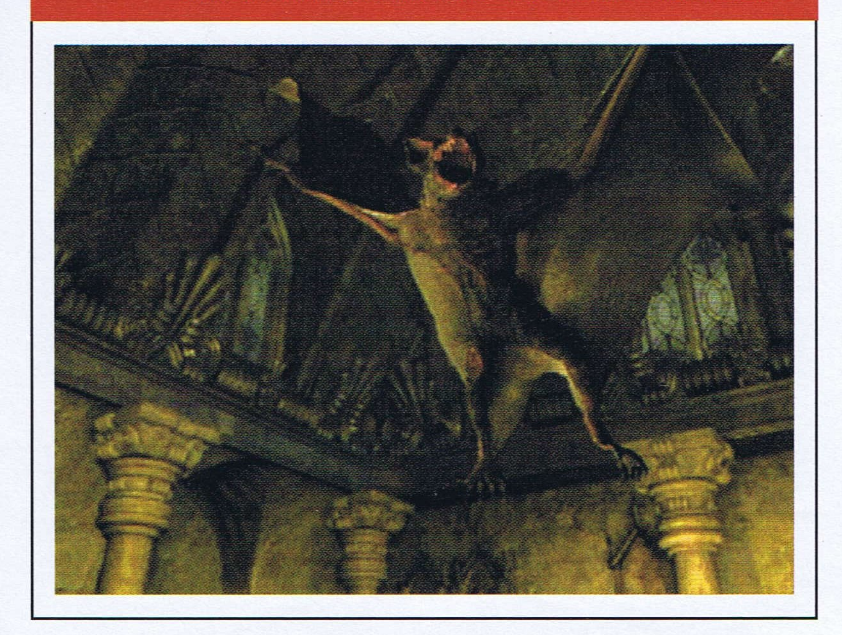
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16

MONSTER! GIANT BAT

The bat, like the Stinger, is another hideous, enormous creature with an attack pattern that's visible to a bright preschooler. It flies about the church, occasionally descending to take a bite of you. When it comes close, intercept its attack with a napalm grenade at near point-blank range; timing is everything. Don't bother firing at any other time, as you've really no chance of hitting it while it's on the wing. As the fight progresses, the larger bat will be joined by a few dozen smaller bats, but they're little more than annoyances.



THE CHAPEL

It's worth mentioning that the Training Facility is still accessible from here. The doors you entered the observatory through used to be on the north side, connected to the feeding room on the third floor; now, due to the observatory's rotation **(14)**, those doors lead to the exterior balcony on the second floor. You can go back to the facility and collect whatever items you left behind, if you like, but you'll have to dodge a pack of Eliminators to do it.

The formerly locked double doors on the southern side of the observatory are now open, and lead outside to the chapel **(15)**. The gazebo near the chapel has a pressure plate in its floor; if one character stands on the pressure plate, the door to the chapel will unlock **(16)**.

Using Rebecca to hold the plate down, equip Billy with the grenade launcher. The chapel is peaceful at the moment **(17)**, but that'll change shortly. Investigate the safe room near the altar for an ink ribbon, shotgun shells, and napalm grenades, then re-enter the chapel, and prepare to confront the Giant Bat.

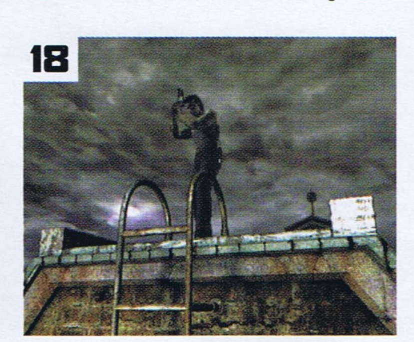
Once the bat is defeated, take a quick trip back outside to drop the grenade launcher and pick up the hookshot. As you've noticed by now, there's a big hole in the roof, courtesy of the bat, and you can use the hookshot to get up there.

From the roof, climb down the ladder **(18)** to reach the back yard and throw the power switch. This'll activate the elevator on the chapel's west side. Grab a red herb from the grass and unlock the wrought-iron gate to reunite with Rebecca.

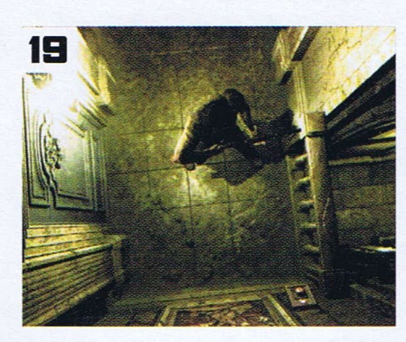
The elevator will take you both down to a subterranean hall, boasting a wrecked staircase and a single door. Here, in an old research room, you'll find another service lift, an ink ribbon, and the Marcus' Diary 2 file. There's another hole in the ceiling here, so you'll want to be breaking out the old hookshot again…



17



18



19



20

PICK AND MIX

It's probably better to send Rebecca upstairs, as you'll need her mixing set in a few minutes. Equip her with the trusty shotgun and a fistful of Molotovs. Downstairs, Billy can scrape by with the custom handgun, but definitely leave three or four Molotovs with him.

Climb up onto the floor above and drop the hookshot. You won't need it again for a while. The Laboratory Manager's Diary file is on the desk chair, and a gas tank is on the bottom shelf of a nearby bookcase. You'll round the next corner to find a leech creature staring you down, but a quick barrage of Molotovs should settle his hash. He was standing in front of a well-lit display case; inspect it and push the button to get the leech capsule. Further, you can find a few more empty bottles in the rack of chemicals next to the display case, and the lab map is on the wall.

Go through the door next to the lab map and you'll find yourself on a balcony overlooking the elevator hall. Push the button on the wall **(19)**, and you'll reveal a previously undiscovered part of the elevator hall. This brings a leech creature out to play, but it also reveals two more doors, green and red herbs, and a tank of red chemical.

Those doors are important, but neither of them can be opened at the moment. One sports a blue bas-relief of James Marcus himself, and, instead of a lock, features something that looks vaguely like a poorbox. The other door has a combination lock on it, but the dial of the lock's been removed **(20)**. Remember both of these.

Back on the balcony, the closest door's locked. The next one, a side door, leads to a machine room, where you can find a green herb, an ink ribbon, a gas tank, and a few more empty bottles. Aside from its loot, that room's useless for the moment, so turn around, leave, and go through the door at the end of the hall to reach the lab.

Watch out for the sleeper zombie on the floor. Take some shotgun shells and the Leech Growth Records file. If you happen to be Rebecca, put the red chemical into your mixing set. If you've already got the green chemical, you'll create the stripping agent. As Marcus' Diary 2 would suggest, you may then combine the stripping agent with the leech capsule **(21)** to get the Bl leech charm.

(If you sent Rebecca upstairs, then she's got everything she needs; there are tanks of



21

both the green chemical and the red chemical on this floor. If she's cooling her heels in the reference room, then things get a little more complicated. Hopefully, you filled her mixing set with the green chemical back in the infirmary, so all you need to do is grab some red chemical from the tank in the elevator hall. Otherwise, to get the green chemical, you'll have to run all the way to the infirmary in the Training Facility and back, through several packs of eliminators.

There's an operating room connected to the lab, where you'll find the other stop for the service lift. Blow away the three zombies who've set up shop here, and send the BI leech charm down to the ground floor via the lift. That charm is just what you need to open the strange blue door in the elevator hall, and access Marcus' study.

Take the handgun bullets from Marcus' desk, and rifle through the bookshelves for the Input Reg. Coil. When you take the latter item, you'll also get the Old Photograph file.

The storage room at the back of the study holds a number of expensive-looking objects, but our only interest is in the Green Leech Charm **(22)**. Grab it and head back to the reference room, so you can use the service lift to send it upstairs.

Switch characters and take the Green Leech Charm from the lift. Further into the operating room, you'll find a first-aid spray, the Investigator's Report file, and a second door bearing Marcus' face. The charm will open that door and let you into the morgue. Inside, you'll find two boxes of those invaluable morticians' tools, handgun bullets, and a canister of sterilising agent.

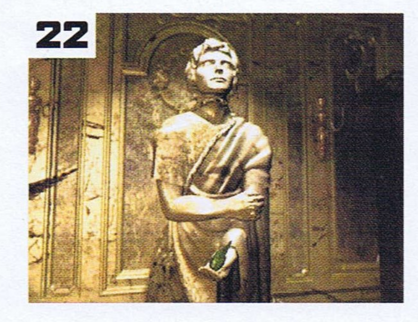
Time to head back to the lab. Use the sterilising agent on the console with the glowing light, and it'll detoxify the gas in the small glass room. Inside, you'll find a zombie and the Breeding Rm. Key. You've only seen one door in this entire building that's just plain locked, right?

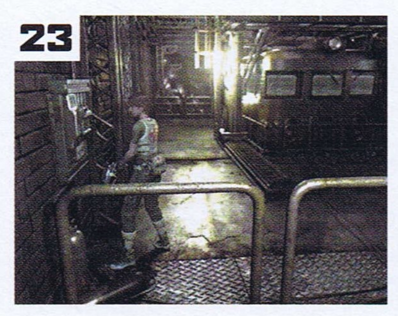
You'll be ambushed by a pair of Hunters in the breeding room, but that's why you have the shotgun handy. Take their hoarded treasure – the B.O.W. Report file and the dial – and return to the operating room.

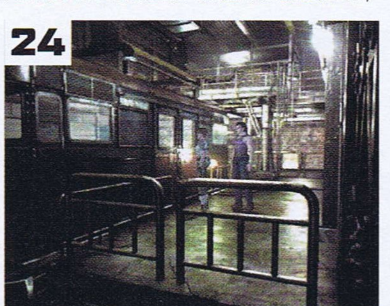
Send the dial down to the ground floor, then switch characters and use the dial on the locked door in the elevator hallway. You've already got the code, assuming you read the Leech Growth Records and Laboratory Manager's Diary files. It's 4863.

The combination lock leads to the lower floor of the machine room, where you'll find a parked cable car. Throw the lever on the wall **(23)**, and you'll connect a ladder to the balcony overhead, enabling your characters to meet back up. There's an Output Reg. Coil on the floor near the bottom of the ladder.

Send your characters back to the observatory to collect whatever items you think you'll need for the rest of the game, particularly the grenade launcher. Be sure to retrieve the hookshot. To start the cable car, one of your characters has to use the hookshot to climb into the control room through a hole in the floor, then use the Input and Output Reg. Coils on the console. As a parting gift, remember to grab the shotgun shells on the floor. To escape the control room, simply unlock the door from the inside.


22


23


24

TRAM JAM

Things start to get slightly problematic at this point. While you can retrieve whatever you have to leave at this tram station, it'll be a pain in the arse.

Give Rebecca the shotgun, shells, any Magnum ammunition you've picked up, and a 100 per cent healing item if one's handy (such as a first-aid spray or a herbal mix). Leave an item slot free.

Billy should be loaded down with the grenade launcher and whatever rounds remain for it. Fill your remaining item slots with spare healing items, Molotov cocktails, or, if you prefer, the Custom Handgun and some bullets.

When you're ready to leave, get both characters down to the bottom floor and try to enter the tram car **(24)**. Things will, of course, not go quite according to plan, and the next thing you know, Rebecca's facing down a leech creature, all by herself. You may dodge it, which may be the smarter option, or shower it in burning petrol, which is more satisfying. The slash Rebecca took from the Eliminator in the cut-scene actually did take away some of her all-too-finite health, so be careful.

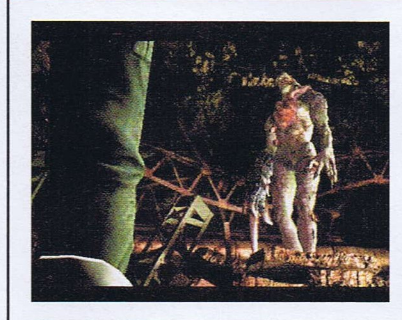
Said leech creature has ripped out the Output Reg. Coil in the control room, so you'll need to go reattach that. This time, when you enter the cable car, you'll leave… but you'll leave alone.

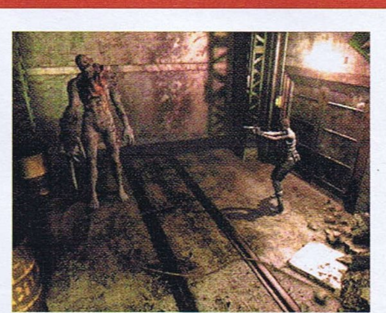
MONSTER! TYRANT

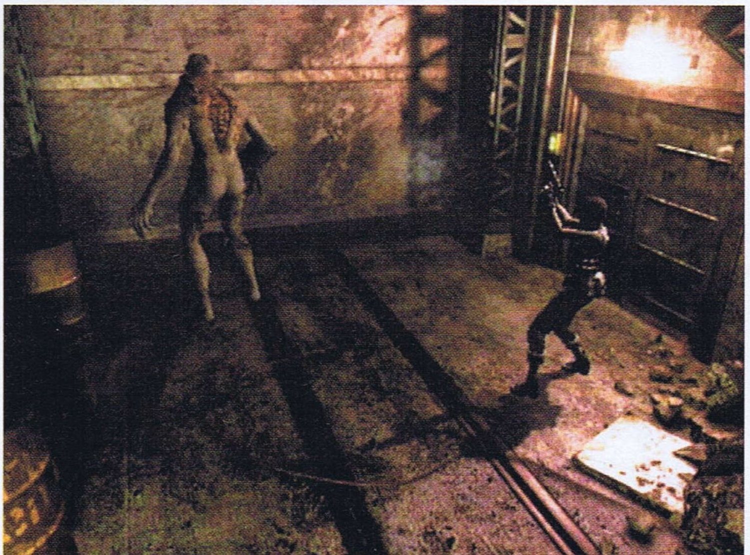
Please table all questions about exactly what the hell this thing is doing here until after you shoot it dead. Thank you.

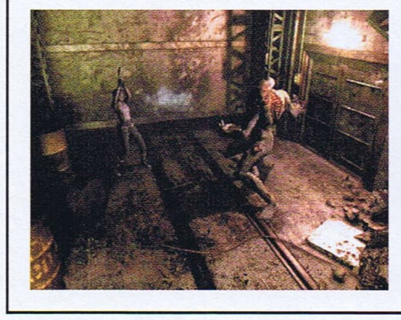
This is one of the tougher Tyrants in the series's history. You can count on burning through nine to 13 Magnum rounds on it before it falls; if you don't have that many, for whatever reason, then either start in on Molotovs or go back to get the shotgun before the fight. Using the shotgun on the Tyrant, however, is really only good for a last great act of defiance.

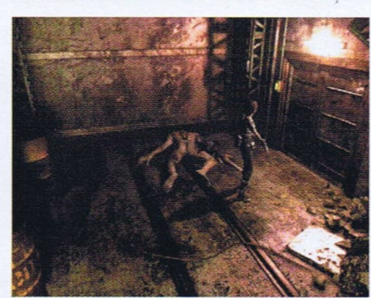
The Tyrant's attack pattern is very simple. It will stand there for a moment; roar, and then jump at Rebecca with a sweeping claw rake. Run to the side as it begins the leap, and you should, just barely, clear its claw-arc. Then, while it recovers, rush to the furthest point from it in the area and shoot it a couple more times. When it hits the floor face-first and seemingly struggles to get back up, it's done.



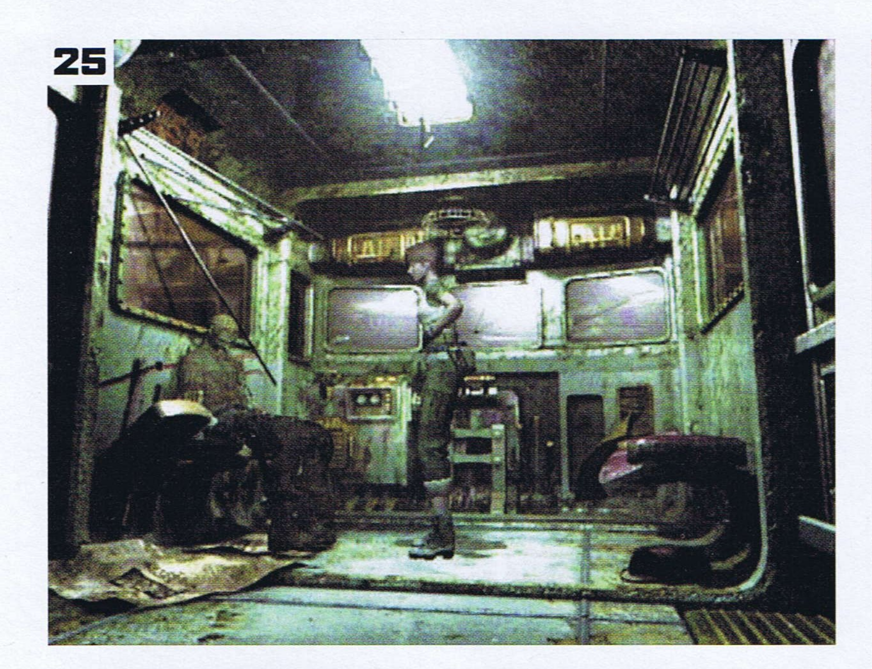


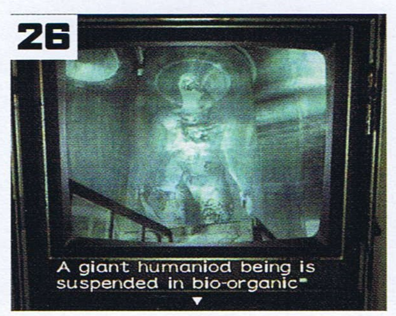






Make the dead even deader in part two of our tips spectacular…

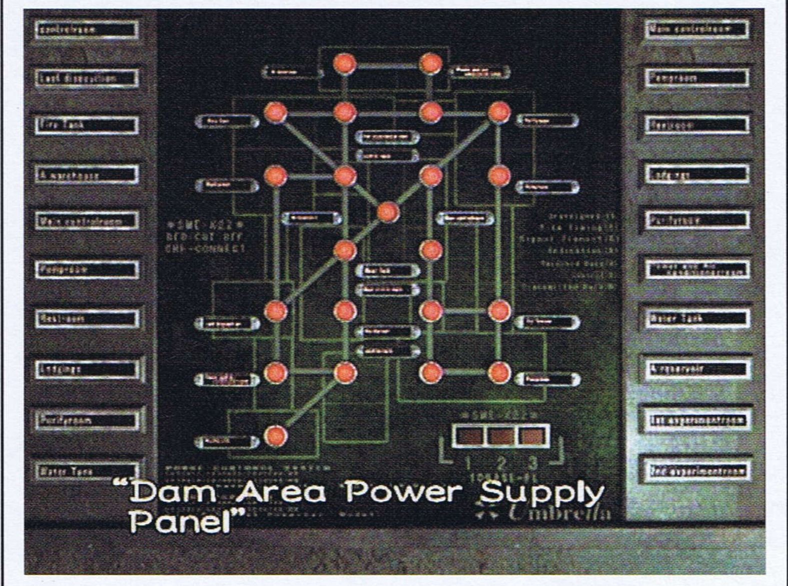
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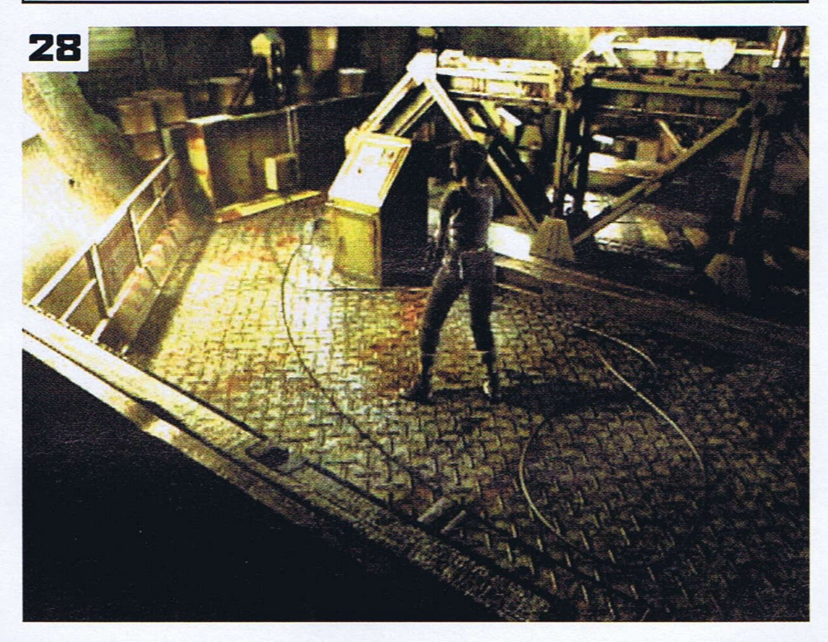
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27


PUZZLE! POWER STATION

The hard-working men and women at Umbrella (Motto: "Tuesdays Are Guess-What-Mutagen-I-Just-Injected-You-With Fun Days!") have, yet again, provided you with a humorous distraction from your humdrum routine of fighting the undead. The rules of the puzzle are quite simple: you must light up the entire grid in three moves. Each button you press will light itself up, as well as the two buttons next to it in every direction.



28


TREATMENT FACILITY

Inside the tram, appropriate the Magnum from the dead man **(25)**, then throw the lever to set the cable car moving. Whatever you do, don't leave anything inside the car, because you won't be able to get back into it once you leave.

At the next station, discard the shotgun and shells to free up some space, then go upstairs and take the unlocked door. You'll find yourself in a warehouse that may seem strangely familiar…

Take the lift in the foreground down and run around the edge of the elevator shaft to the monitor room. Check the lone working screen for a bit of foreshadowing **(26)**, then take the Factory Key. As you get ready to leave, arm yourself with the Magnum. A Hunter will appear suddenly as you round the corner, as though begging you for a bullet; once you shoot it, wait there for a few seconds until its companion comes shambling into view.

Your new Factory Key works in the console in the small office just off the warehouse, where it'll call the turntable back up **(27)**. This office deals in unique cargo, as represented by the handgun bullets and grenades scattered throughout. There's also an ink ribbon on the desk, for all your saving needs, as well as a hidden first-aid spray inside the open cabinet by the door, and an arguably unimportant factory map tacked up on the wall.

Go back outside and check out the freshly arrived turntable. Use the console near the back to send it down **(28)**. You'll find yourself on the top floor of another laboratory **(29)**. There's something shiny on the ground in front of the elevator to the west, and you need it; if you should have to discard something to pick it up, like a healing item, be sure to discard said item in front of the rockfall to the east.

Before you can take the Elevator Key, you'll meet up with Enrico Marini. He will subsequently disappear.

The Elevator Key works to operate the door next to the rockslide **(30)**. As the lift hums to life, watch out; there's a special guest star on deck…

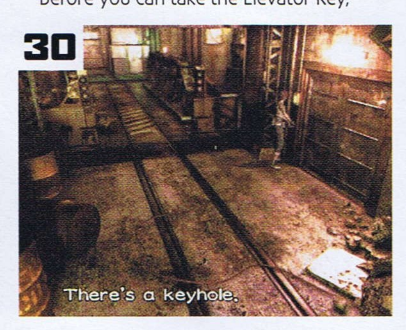
Once you finish off the Tyrant, its death occasions the arrival of the elevator. There are four stops on this lift, counting the floor you're on **(31)**. The first floor takes you back to the train yard at the bottom of the Training Facility, while the second floor is a stop on a narrow walkway on the turntable's shaft **(32)**. There's a Hunter standing guard here; fell it with a single Magnum round, then loot the place. You can find such valuable prizes in this area as Magnum rounds, handgun bullets, a green herb, and a red herb. Even better, the door at the end of the walkway leads back to the stopped tram, so you can reclaim the shotgun you dropped there earlier.

The fourth stop on the lift will bring you to the Treatment Facility, the final stage of *Resident Evil Zero*. A pair of movies will herald this event, and after that, feel free to leave via the southern door to find the facility's control room.

There's a gas tank just inside the entrance, and handgun bullets on the security desk, next to an ink ribbon waiting patiently beside a typewriter. Before you do much of anything else, you'll need to solve yet another power-related puzzle…

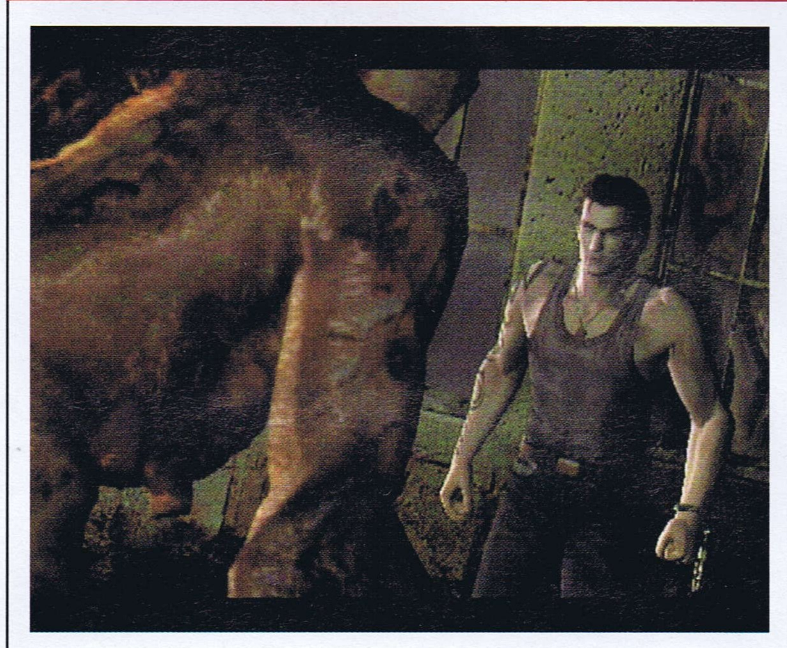
With the power turned back on, the lights and lift will work. Ditch the Magnum and any remaining bullets for it here, for the moment, and descend into the facility with

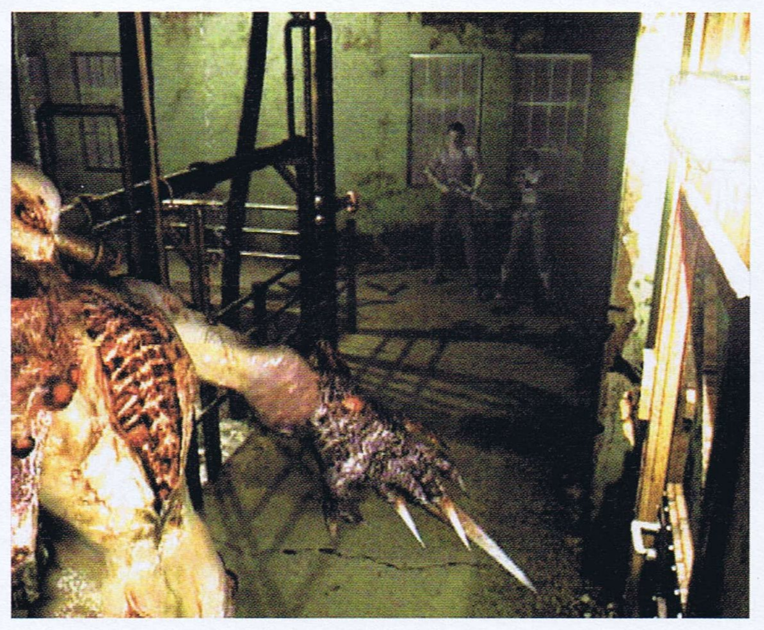
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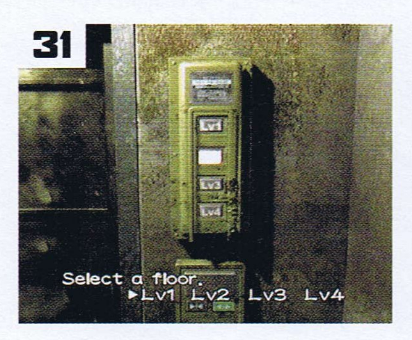

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MONSTER! TYRANT #2

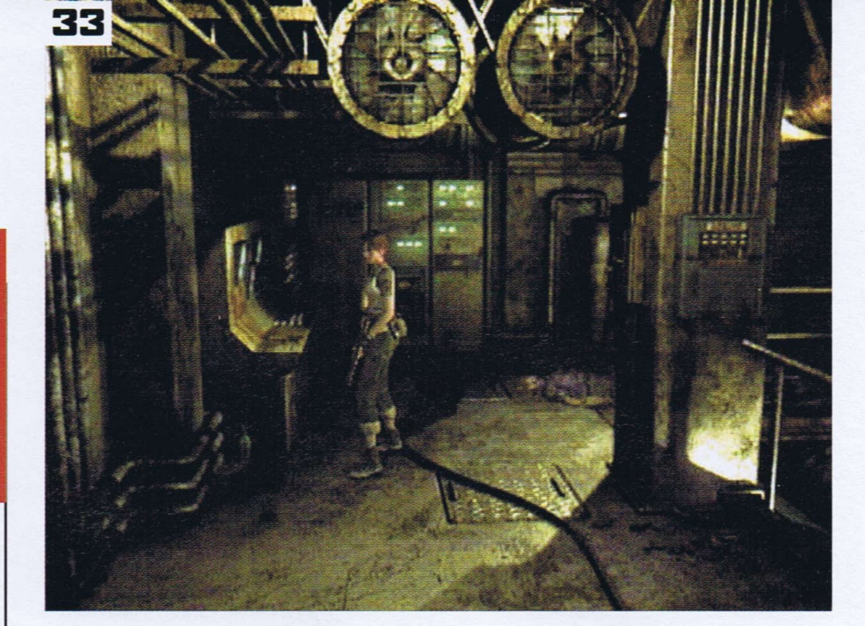
This Tyrant isn't as tough as the last one. It 'only' takes nine Magnum rounds to drop, but you're somewhat hamstrung by your environment. The corners of the walkway can work for you, forcing the Tyrant to abort its leap attacks in favour of slowly making its way towards you (thus absorbing Magnum rounds the whole way), but if you get pinned in either corner, it'll cost you a lot of blood to get back out. The fastest way to get out of this is, simply, to start firing the moment you get the chance. If you open up the moment you regain control, or if you bring both Rebecca and Billy down here, you'll probably drop the tyrant before it gets the chance to attack.

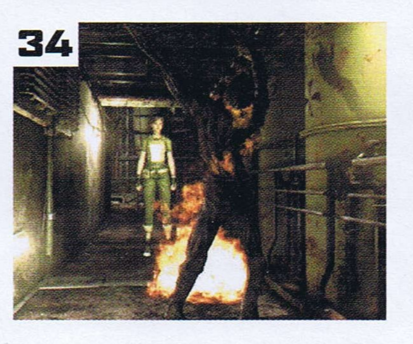














the shotgun in hand.

Blast a few zombies, then collect some empty bottles **(33)**, a green herb, and a red herb from the floor. The last leech creature in the game is lurking in the next corridor, so before you step on its turf, take a moment to mix up a few Molotovs **(34)**.

The next door you come to is missing its handle. Past it is the treatment facility's bar, which has been largely depleted by the hard-drinkin' men of Umbrella. They've left some empty bottles in the corner for you, thoughtfully, and the Treatment Facility map is hung on the wall.

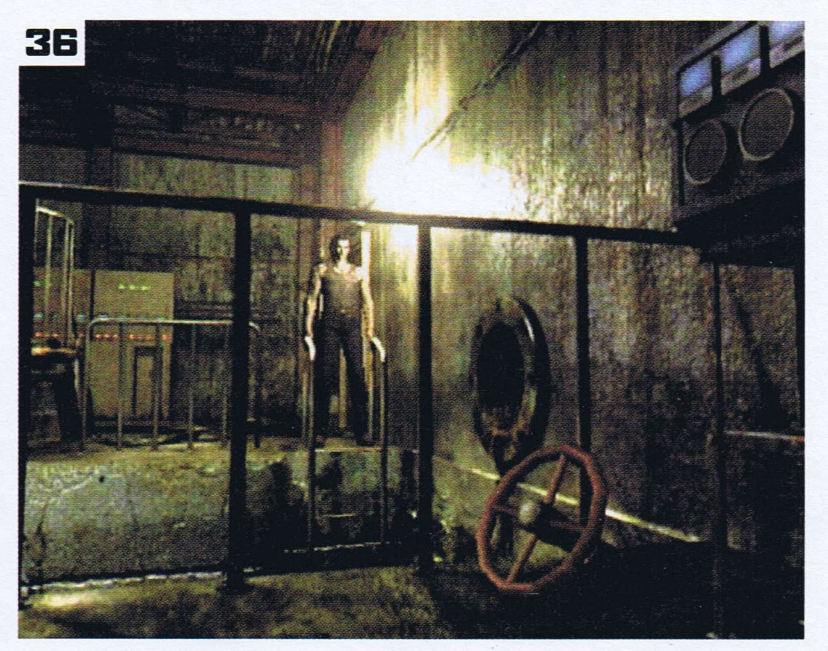
Downstairs from the bar, something shiny is atop the nearby hill, but your only method of attaining it – a handy forklift – currently lacks a battery **(35)**. No matter; collect the green and red herbs that grow out here and move on. The drainage room next door has a fresh box of shotgun shells under the counter, and as you pass through it, make note of the handle that's on the other side of the drainage ditch, out of reach **(36)**.

Through the drainage room and downstairs, you'll finally catch back up with a half-drowned, but still alive, Billy Coen. Pick him back up, then head back to the drainage room. Here, you'll come across a slight problem involving some floating crates.

Speaking of *Resident Evil 2*...

Billy may have half a lake in his lungs right now, but he's still strong enough to go down there and shove a few crates around. Leave Rebecca on the top level to work the controls, and send him down the ladder to get to work.

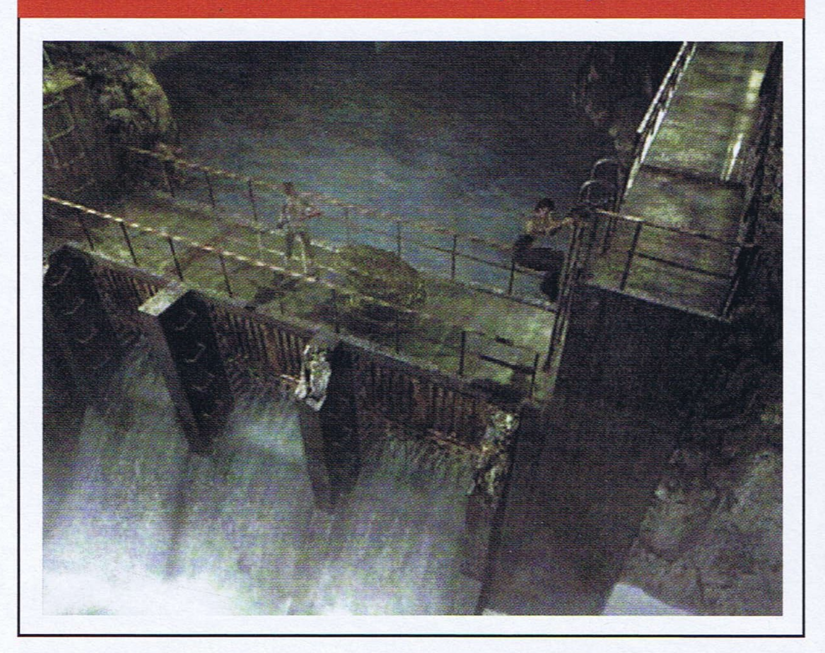
Your goal is to push all three wooden crates against the far wall of the ditch, so that when the ditch gets flooded, the crates will float and create a makeshift bridge. The grey crate is made of metal, so it won't float.



MONSTER! LURKER

It's possible that you'll never see the Lurker. It'll sometimes show up in watery parts of the Treatment Facility, such as the bridge over the dam. If you do encounter one, your likely immediate reaction will be to laugh at its amusing frog-like ways. Big mistake.

A Lurker attacks with its great googly tongue. If you're hit with the tongue at long range, it'll do mild damage, but closer up, it'll coil around the legs of your character like a bola. The Lurker will then drag its victim into its waiting mouth. You can hammer on the buttons to get free, or set your partner to Attack mode and hope the Lurker gets killed before you do. The simpler solution is to just run like hell, so if the Lurker does show up, it won't get the chance to attack.

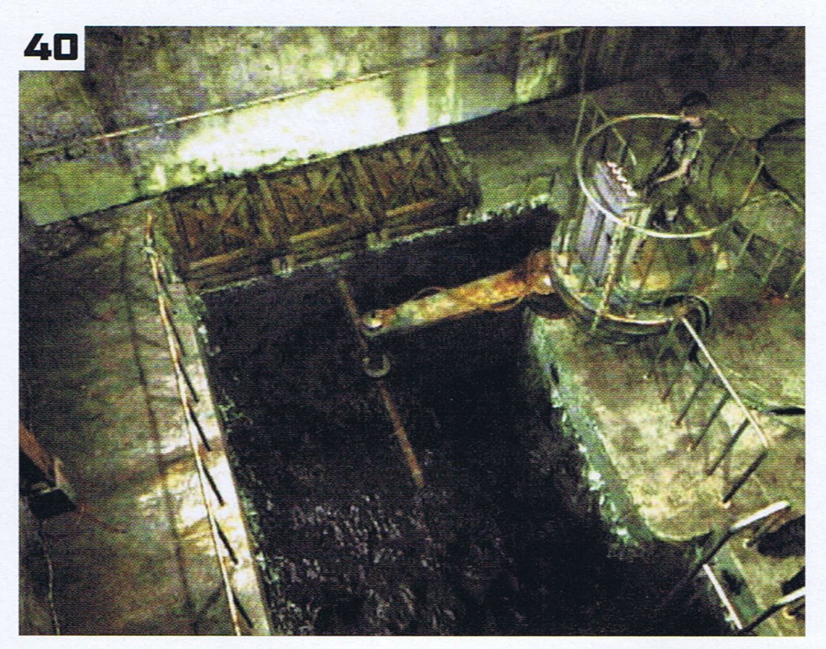




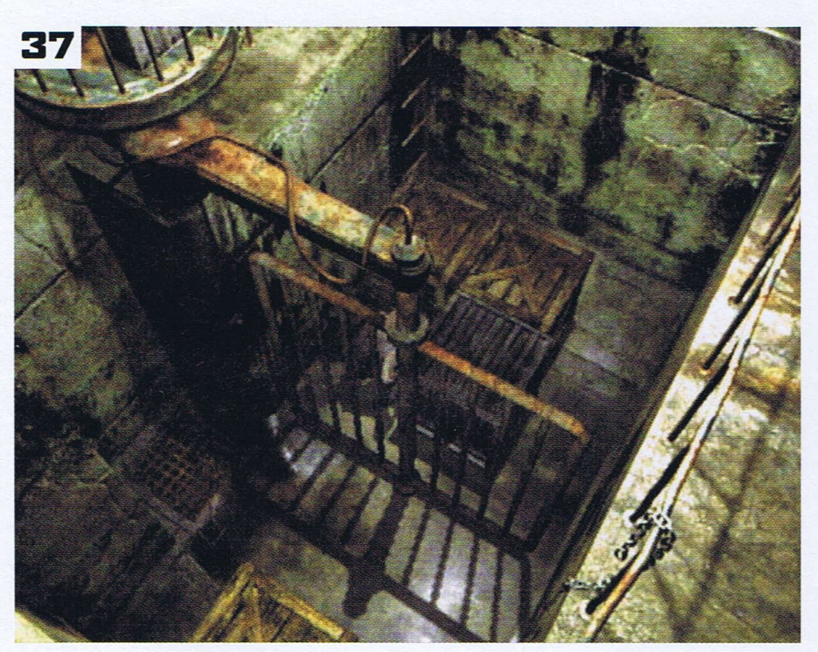
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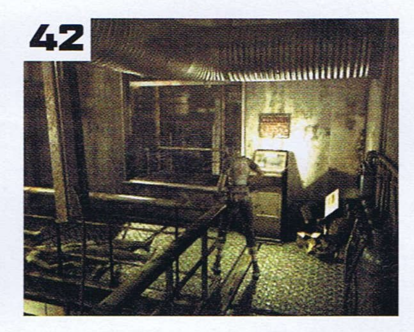
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42

Climb over the wooden crates and shove the metal crate over to the right side of the ditch, relative to this screen **(37)**. Get Billy out of the way, then have Rebecca rotate the grate to the right.

Switch back to Billy, and push the wooden crate on the left straight forwards, until it's partially in front of the small drainage alcove, closer to the far wall. You want to get Billy into that alcove and clear the way, so Rebecca can rotate the grate to the left again, but so he still has clearance on either side of the crate **(38, 39)**.

Now, there's a wooden crate that's already in position against the far wall. Push it all the way to the right wall. Now, take the crate you've moved over here and shove it against the far wall, where the previously mentioned crate once was. You should wind up with two crates against the far wall, and space for a third on Rebecca's side of the drainage ditch.

Get Billy out of the way and rotate the grate to the right again. From here, all you should have to do is push the last remaining wooden crate over to the left side of the ditch, then straight across and into position. Climb the ladder, then switch to Rebecca and fill the drainage ditch with water. The crates will rise up, letting you walk across them to the other side of the ditch to claim the handle **(40)**.

HANDLE WITH SCARE

That handle will serve to open the door outside the bar, although a few more zombies have entered the area since you've been here last. Dispatch them, and split your characters up. Becky and her shotgun should enter the newly handled door first, the better to dispatch a pack of disquietingly naked zombies who lurk within. Meanwhile, send Billy back to the security room to retrieve the Magnum.

With the zombies dealt with, send Rebecca up the ladder on the wall. The balcony is inhabited by two green herbs, a single, lonely zombie – this shotgun shell will be its friend – and a dead man, who still clutches the Investigator's Report 2 file **(41)**. Further, there's a dusty tank of red chemical, which should be put in Rebecca's mixing set.

Switch to Billy and the Magnum and proceed from the naked zombies' former lair through the east exit. You'll find a short hall inhabited by a pair of Hunters, who both require Magnum pacification.

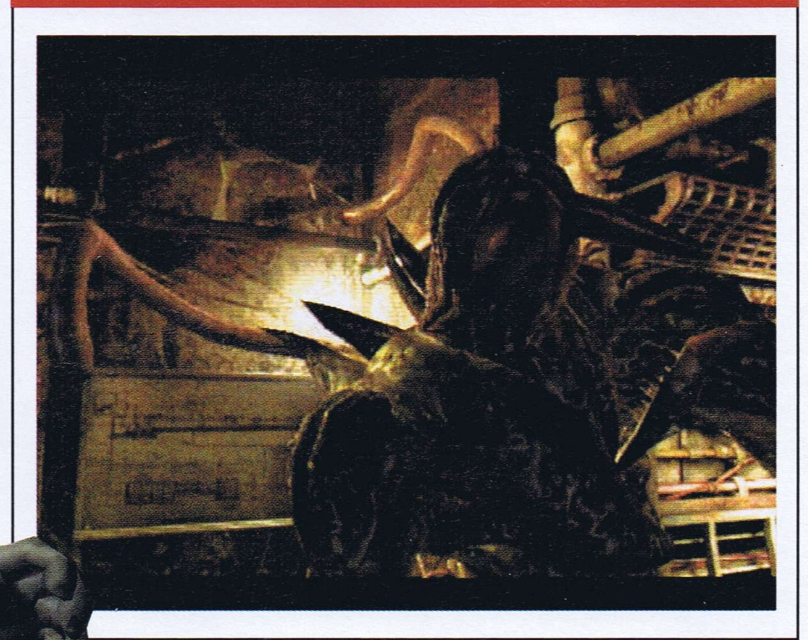
Those Hunters were set as sentries to the last safe room in the game, which, above and beyond its obvious use as an item cache, contains such treasures as an ink ribbon, a case of napalm grenades, a box of handgun bullets, a first-aid spray, the About Battery Fluid file, a red herb, and a green herb. Useful…

Leave the safe room via the east exit, go downstairs, and across the bridge. You'll come to a roomful of disturbingly naked zombies; the Treatment Plant Manager's Diary, and a box of shotgun shells are in the corner of the room. The large hole in the wall turns out to be the loading point for a gondola **(42)** (the cable-car kind, not the Venetian kind). This gondola is a rather high-tech model – and without its motherboard, it won't work. Take the lift in the corner

MONSTER! ULTIMATE LEECH CREATURE

At the beginning of the bout, fighting the ULC isn't that much unlike going up against a big, slow leech creature. It attacks with long-ranged slaps, a double slash that hits just about anything in front of it, and a short-ranged stranglehold, but has a hard time dividing its attention between two targets. Your best bet may be to split your characters up and take control of Rebecca, who can blow large holes in the ULC while he's concentrating on Billy.

Use up any Molotov cocktails that you might have, then switch to other weapons. You want to conserve the Magnum for now, so use the grenade launcher. Acid rounds seem to work best against the ULC, followed by napalm grenades, normal grenades, and the shotgun. When you've done about half-damage to the ULC, it'll sprout tentacles from its back and turn its offensive up a notch. Should one of its wild haymakers connect, whoever's hit will go flying across the room. By now, the ULC is reeling, and a few more grenades and shotgun blasts should put it down for good.



47



down to B9, where you'll find a single door. It leads outside, across a dam, but all that's here for the moment is a pair of green herbs. To get anything done here, you'll need to circle the bank of machinery in the centre of the room and hit the glowing button on the wall, but do so with your Magnum in hand. Trouble's coming your way in the form of another Tyrant. Treat him to some bullets forthwith.

The button drops a ladder, which leads to an otherwise-inaccessible part of B8. You'll find the motherboard here **(43)**. Take it back to the gondola's control panel and plug it in its slot. Rebecca's about to go on a little ride, all by herself… **(44)**.

The gondola will drop Rebecca off inside the dam's control room, where, with the turn of a lever **(45)**, you'll raise the bridge on B9. Pick up a case of acid grenades near the wrecked stairs on one side of the room, then hit the computer room via the only available door. The industrial water, acid grenades, and tank of blue chemical are all contained therein **(46)**.

Combine the red chemical in your mixing set with the blue chemical, and you'll make sulphuric acid. Now, mix the acid with the industrial water, as suggested by the About Battery Fluid file, to make battery fluid.

Unlock the door next to the tank of blue chemical, and you'll open the route for Billy to meet back up with Rebecca. Switch to him, and backtrack from wherever you left him to the room on B8 where Rebecca found him before. He can now go through the door on the south wall to find the computer room.

ASSAULT AND BATTERY

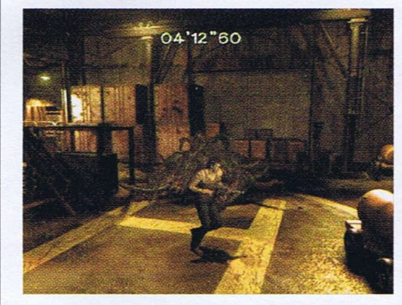
Hit Start to join your characters up again, then go downstairs. Billy can give Rebecca a boost **(47)** to reach the empty battery on the shelf, and, predictably, the two cockroaches in storage will break out right

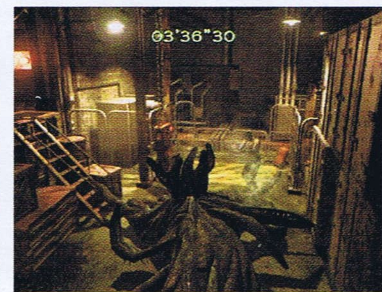
Make the dead even deader in part two of our tips spectacular…

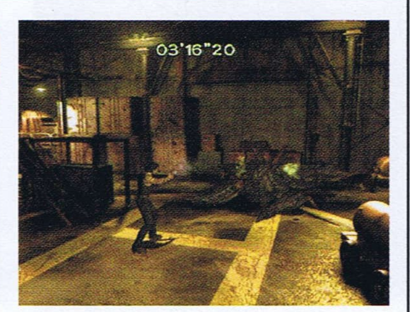
FINAL BOSS! QUEEN LEECH

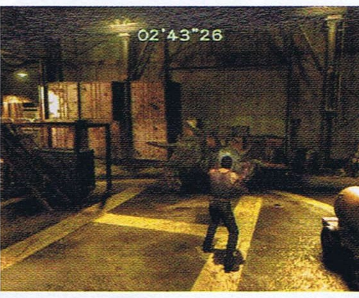
You have five minutes, starting now, to win this fight and escape. Marcus's Queen Leech takes up a lot of space, but she's slow. She can cover her flanks with a spray of acidic fluid, hitting anyone standing within an 180-degree arc of her head. Beyond that, her fiercest attack is head-butting an unwary opponent across the room, or a weak tail-slap that doesn't even knock you down. At the start of the fight, bombard the Queen with everything you have, especially grenades, until a cut-scene kicks in. You are in a bit of a hurry, so don't spare the firepower. You'll be given the Gate Operation Manual file.

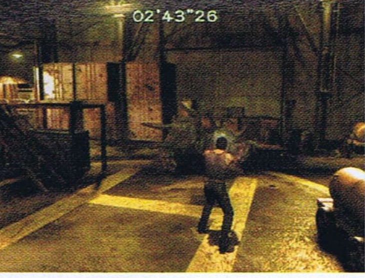
As Billy, your task is to keep the Queen occupied and away from Rebecca so Rebecca can open the roof. She'll start with the first latch handle, then, as indicated by cut-scenes, run from one handle to the next until her job's done. Should Rebecca get injured during this scrap, you can switch to her item list in the inventory screen to heal her, or trade items to her list from Billy's if you get close enough. To distract the Queen, equip the Magnum and fire at will, doing everything you can to keep the Queen focused on Billy and away from Rebecca. As a general rule, if you really want Queenie to focus on Billy, shoot her in the face, then run away. She'll shrug off attacks to her side or tail, but a bullet to the head will get anyone's attention.

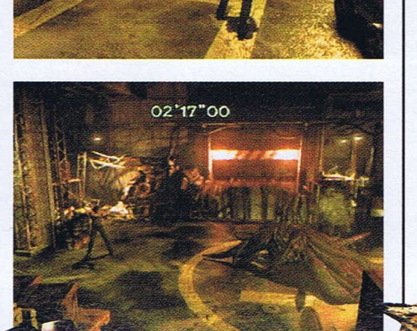


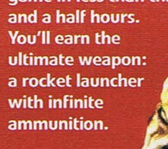












after you get it.

Combine the battery fluid with the empty battery to make the hi-power battery, then backtrack to the broken forklift. While Rebecca installs the battery in the forklift, get Billy to step up onto the crate it's lifting **(48)**. When she pushes the button, the lift will take Billy up to the keycard.

Head back to the dam at B9. With the bridge up, you can reach the incinerator, but first you'll have to deal with the Lurker.

Past the dam, you'll find handgun bullets at the bottom of the broken stairs. Go around the corner, past the two shameless naked zombies (ugh), to find shotgun shells and a locked door. Your keycard will take care of the latter.

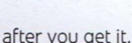
Step through the door and grab a box of Magnum rounds from the floor at the end of the hall. Now prepare your characters and step through to confront the penultimate boss: the Ultimate Leech Creature…

Upon his second, and presumably final, death, Marcus will drop a pair of shaft keys, much like a piñata does candy. Furthermore, if you have a nosey around the incinerator room, you'll find a box of Magnum rounds in an isolated corner.

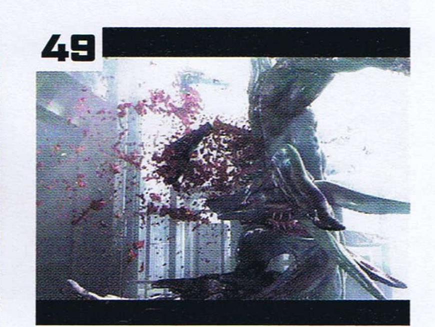
Have each character grab a shaft key, and use one key on either console at the same time to open the door to the freight elevator.

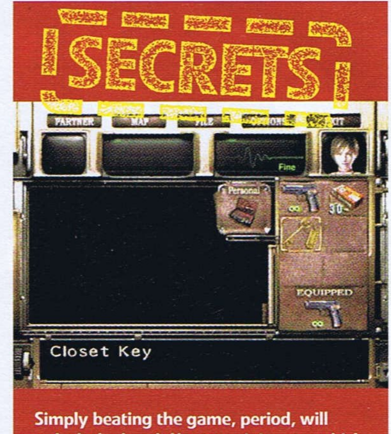
Before you go up, the shelves here are packed with useful items. A typewriter on the table is bordered by handgun bullets and an ink ribbon; you'll also find two first-aid sprays, a case of grenades, a box of shotgun shells, a green herb, and a red herb. Gather up everything you can carry, then activate the lift to reach the final terrifying encounter…

Once you've killed the Queen Leech, and Rebecca manages to throw the final switch and open the roof, it's game over **(49)**. Congratulations! You've finished *Resident Evil Zero*!




48


49



Simply beating the game, period, will unlock the Leech Hunter minigame, which is playable after loading a completed save. Also, the next time you start a game of *Resi Zero*, Rebecca will begin with the Closet Key in her inventory. When you use the Closet Key on the closet with a "strange lock" on the second floor of the train, you'll be able to change into your characters' alternative outfits.

The other secrets in the game are dependent upon your final rank, which is, in turn, dependent upon how long it took you to finish the game. Unlike past offerings in the *Resident Evil* series, you aren't penalised in *RE0* for the use of first-aid sprays, the number of times you saved, or firing certain weapons. It's all about the time.

On the other hand, you don't get much of anything unless you achieve an A ranking or better. To get an A, finish the game in five hours or better, and you'll earn the submachine gun; to earn an S rank, the best you can get, finish the game in less than three and a half hours. You'll earn the ultimate weapon: a rocket launcher with infinite ammunition.



in association with Virgin megastores

THE TIPS YOU NEED FOR THE GAMES YOU'RE PLAYING...

TIPS EXTRA



YOUR MOST WANTED TIPS

RESIDENT EVIL ZERO

LEECHING

They may not be quite the T-Virus-mutated monsters you were expecting, but those small slimy leeches are the key to unlocking those *Resi* extras you need to survive. This time, beating the game on all three difficulty modes lets you run amok in the Leech Hunter minigame so you can round up a fair few of the little bloodsuckers. As an even greater leech-added bonus, getting over 100 of the little critters in the minigame gives you unlimited ammo for every single weapon you come across in the game. Leech-tastic, huh?

DRESS YOU UP IN MY LOVE

Completing the game on Normal or Hard mode will result in a closet key being placed in Rebecca's locker. Why, you might ask? Why else? So you can play in the alternative outfits, of course! Marvel as big boy Billy spiffs up in a smart dinner jacket, while Rebecca gets all kinky in her leather cat-suit or cowgirl uniform.

GHOST RECON

MEDALS OF HONOUR

To gain maximum military respect and make your way up Tom Clancy's very own Medal Scale Of Honour And Valour In A Videogame, you'd better start clocking up some of the following kills:

Purple Heart Get wounded or, worse still, killed in action
Bronze Star Get 15 kills
Silver Star Get 20 kills
Distinguished Service Cross Get 25 kills
Congressional Medal Of Honour Get a mammoth 30 kills

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE

SITTING DOWN ON A CHAIR

Tired of standing around waiting in the lobby? Try holding down X and tapping A for a chair! If it starts to annoy you, press B to make it disappear.

MOVE IT

While hanging around to go online, you can entertain yourself by using the control stick to move that glittering ball of light. Likewise, you can twist the warp tunnel about when going into an area. Big fun!

HARDER

To up the ante on the difficulty level front, beat the game on Normal to play with the big boys in the Hard mode. Similarly, beating Hard mode opens up the Very Hard option, and beating that brings forth the delights of the Ultimate mode.

NGC READER KNOWLEDGE!

The other day I completed Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers with Aragorn, Gimli and Leoglas and got Islidur as a fully playable character! I was over the moon as that's my favourite character!
Alex Miller, East Croydon

PAC-MAN WORLD 2

OLD-SKOOL STYLE

Those tokens you collect during the latest update for Namco's old icon of gaming unlock the following classic titles and oddities…

Pac-Man Ten tokens
Pac-Attack 30 tokens
Jukebox 60 tokens
Pac-Mania 100 tokens
Museum 150 tokens
Ms Pac-Man 180 tokens

KEEP BOUNCING

If you find yourself falling from a great height, make sure to butt-bounce before you hit ground zero. This way there's no danger of you losing one of those oh-so-vital wedges you're saving.

NGC READER KNOWLEDGE!

In Super Smash Bros Melee, tapping the C-stick performs a weak Smash attack – but if you quickly tap Z immediately afterwards, you charge it up.
Shane Rynhart, Dorset



WINNING ELEVEN 6 FINAL EVOLUTION

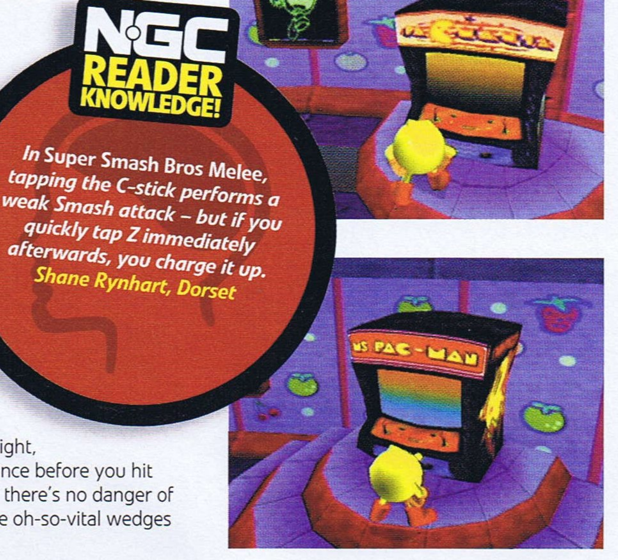
OLD TIMERS

Each of the following countries has a secret 'classic' team made up of stars of yesteryear which can be unlocked: England; France; Holland; Italy; Germany; Brazil, and Argentina. And to unlock them? Win the European Cup with the team in question (or, due to pesky reasons of geography, the American Cup with Brazil or Argentina).

NUBILE YOUNG BUCKS

You can also gain these players by completing the relevant training challenge:

Nakamura Short pass
Miccoli Dribbling
Djalminha Free kick
Pandiani Ball keep
Simao Long pass



READERS' TOP TEN TIPS

Top tippage from you lot, the lovely darling readers. Top of the top tippage pile wins a game as well. Top stuff all round, then.



1. ANIMAL CROSSING
Get rich the cheating way
If you need some extra money to buy, ooh, a fancy carpet, then change the system date on your Gamecube to the new year. Check your mailbox and you'll have been sent 10,000 bells by your parents. Keep saving and repeating this.
Tristan Lake, Reading

2. SUPER MONKEY BALL
Monkey punching
When you're playing the Monkey Fight minigame, the winner can punch the screen as the camera closes in on them after a match. The screen will shake, and sometimes it wobbles and zooms out. Cool, huh?
Edward Sperring, East Sussex

3. ETERNAL DARKNESS
Health, wealth and prosperity
Before going into a tough battle, cast the Magic Pool spell using the Mantorok Rune found on level 6. This will constantly replenish your health, sanity and magic meters all at once. Which is pretty useful.
Dave Every, Cheshire

4. SUPER SMASH BROS
Man and dinosaur love-statue
Use a memory card with *Mario Sunshine* saves on it when you're playing *Super Smash Bros Melee* and you'll be given a brand-spanking-new Mario and Yoshi trophy to add to your collection.
Mark Reeve, Milton Keynes

5. MEDAL OF HONOR: FRONTLINE
Silver bullet
Go to the enigma machine and type in SILVERSHOT to play the game with silver bullets. A very decadent way to fight, I'm sure you'll agree.
Yusaf Ahmed, London

6. SMUGGLER'S RUN
How high?
For some nice simple mindless fun, try driving into the gas containers at the gas station in the North America level – they'll blow you sky-high! Not sure how safe it is in real life, though…
Daryl Van Cauwelaert, Bucks

7. JAMES BOND 007: NIGHTFIRE
Long-distance Clara
On The Exchange, go to the first building and then keep on moving until you see a lorry. You can nip through the gate to the left of it to take a sneaky shortcut.
Edward L Riley, Norwich

8. 1950S SHOPPING LIST
Vintage foodstuffs
Pork joint; cheese; sausages (cocktail); ham; pop; two wine; pork pies; turkey; teacakes; 22 trifles; chips; mince pies.
John Davies, Lancs

9. MARIO SUNSHINE
I will survive
Press B during a fall to survive without taking damage.
Liam Coleman, Kent

10. TIMESPLITTERS 2
Losing your head
Zombies are really annoying, so to kill them in one shot, shoot their heads off. Then they die.
Alec Wayman, Wiltshire

The injection of help you need to ease your gaming pain



He is a doctor, not a showgirl, but he still wears yellow feathers in his hair…

Dr Kitts,
I've had *Metroid Fusion* on the GBA for a long time and I like it (apart from the nasty graphics and irritating puzzles). Anyway, how do you beat the boss Nightmare?
Aamir Ilyas, via email

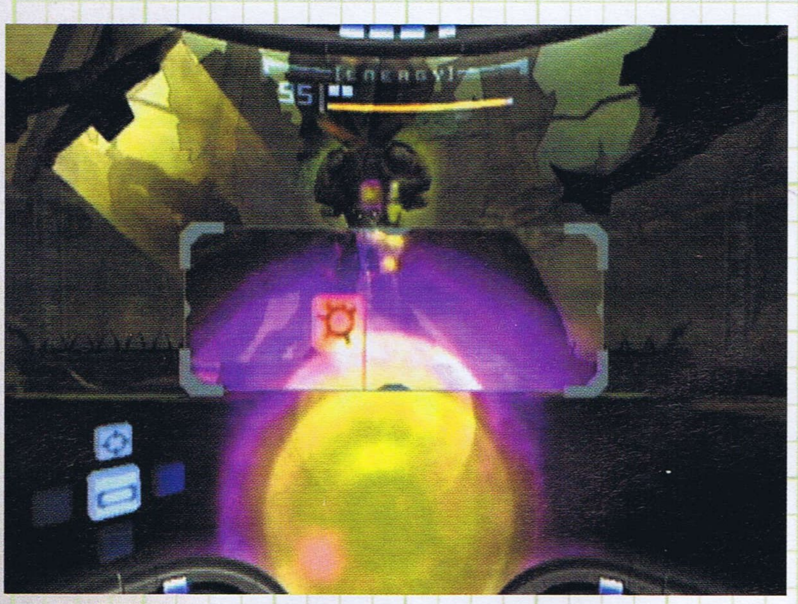
Dr Kitts formulates a medical cure for the stuffy congestion charge…
One of my old patients from the olden golden days of medicine, where you could experiment away without fear of professional reproach, Nightmare takes on three forms. The first two are easy enough to dispatch of; just jump over his shots and Charge Beam the vulnerable section at the bottom. For the third form, position yourself on the very bottom rung on the left-hand side. This should align you with his weak point, so let off about ten missiles at it. It's then a case of heading up and making him follow you around in circles until he's back at his starting point. Now you can rinse and repeat as desired.

Dr Kitts,
You have to help me! In *Resident Evil*, how do I solve the puzzle with the clock in the dining room? I've been stuck for ages!
Paul de Wit, Netherlands

Dr Kitts moves on up the NGC Know Your Rank-o-meter. Edwards remains in last place…
After placing the Golden Emblem (which you should have picked up after Jill finishes tinkling the ebony and ivory keys), place it above the fire place. The clock will now open. Examine the gears inside it, and change the time to 6:00 by simply moving the large gear to the right twice. That's it.

Dr Kitts,
I am hopelessly and utterly flummoxed by the Incinerator Drone battle in the sublime *Metroid Prime*. What am I meant to be shooting at?
Ryan Dolby, Manchester

Dr Kitts keeps Dubya on hold for another hour while he catches up on the latest episode of 24…
First of all, you must strafe to dodge the enemy fire, jumping over or ducking under it (as the Morph Ball) when necessary. Shoot the wasps if you want to, but just make sure you keep circling around and around until the red spot appears. When it does, lock on to that and blast away. After a few rounds of this the whole thing will, quite literally, go up in flames.





CODE BANK

Don't waste your hard-earned money playing games properly – cheat!



VEXX

Enter these codes on the Cheat Code menu to make this so-so game a whole lot less 'vexxing'. Sorry.

- **XXEVEDOMDOG** Invincibility
- **XXEVPIKS** Level select
- **XXEVTOOFYTFIF** Super jump ability

LORD OF THE RINGS: TWO TOWERS

Hold down the L and R shoulder buttons, then enter the following code patterns…

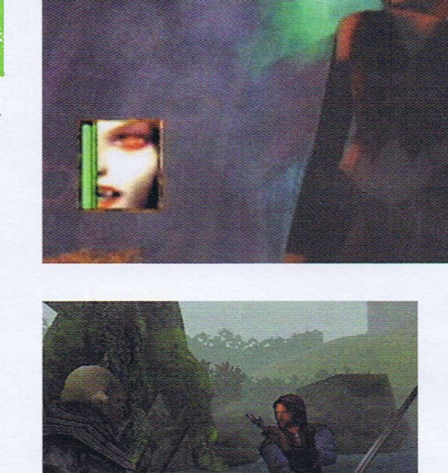
- **A, A, Down, Down** All last level upgrades
- **Y, B, A, X** Invincibility
- **B, B, X, X** Devastating attacks
- **Y, Y, A, A** Tiny enemies
- **Y, X, Y, X** All upgrades
- **B, X, A, Y** Infinite arrows and axes
- **A, Down, Down, Down** Instant 1,000 experience
- **X, Right, X, Right** Level 2 skills
- **Y, Up, Y, Up** Level 4 skills
- **B, Left, B, Left** Level 6 skills
- **A, A, Down, Down** Level 8 Skills
- **A, Down, Y, Up** Refill long-range meter
- **Y, Down, A, Up** Restore life to 100%
- **Y, X, A, B** Slow motion

The following hidden extras are also available for your perusal…

- **John Rhys-Davies Interview** Get Gimli to level 5
- **Orlando Bloom Interview** Get Legolas to level 5
- **Viggo Mortensen Interview** Get Aragon to level 5

NGC READER KNOWLEDGE!

If you're playing NFL 2K3, then you can see some super snazzy highlights of your best moments on the gridiron by winning the Super Bowl in Franchise Mode.
James Fisher, Dunstable



NBA 2K3

To open up the codes section, highlight Gameplay, hold Left on the digital control pad and Right on the analogue stick, then press Start. Type in **MEGASTARS** (all in capitals) to unlock the Sega Sports, Visual Concepts and Team 2K2 line-ups in Exhibition and Street modes.

DR MUTO

Some codes. Which you enter. On the cheat screen. That's all.

- **BEAMMEUP** All areas unlocked
- **HOTTICKET** All FMVs unlocked
- **TINKERTOY** All gadgets unlocked
- **EUREKA** All morphs unlocked
- **CHEATERBOY** Don't take any damage
- **NECROSCI** Invinsibility
- **LOGGLOGG** All secret morphs unlocked
- **BUZZOFF** Super ending

BLOOD RAYNE

Get more blood to the pound with these extra codes…

- **INSANEGIBSMODEGOOD** Dismemberment
- **ANGRYXXXINSANEHOOKER** Fill bloodlust
- **DONTFARTONOSCAR** Freeze enemies
- **TRIASSASSINDONTDIE** God mode
- **ONTHELEVEL** Level select
- **JUGGYDANCESQUAD** More female asset ounce to the bounce
- **LAMEYANKEEDONTFEED** Regain health
- **BRIMSTONEINTHEBAYOU** Secret Louisiana level
- **SHOWMEMYWEAPONS** Show all weapons
- **NAKEDNASTYDISHWASHERDANCE** Time factor
- **TERMINALREALITYRULES** Programmer message 1
- **ALBATROSS** Programmer message 2
- **SATANRULES** Programmer message 3 and a chat with the devil
- **TERMINALREALITYISCOOL** Programmer message 4
- **IAMANGRY** Programmer message 5
- **NAKEDHOOKER** Programmer message 6
- **IAMNAKED** Programmer message 7
- **TERMINALREALITYISLAME** Programmer message 8



YOUR TOP TIPS Share the knowledge and bag yourself a prize…

Found an interesting cheat, tip, secret or quirky thing in one of your games? Then send it into us immediately! Each month we'll stick the best into our Readers' Tips section. In return, if your tip is the number one readers' tip, we'll send you a Gamecube game of your choice. Sound good? Then don't hesitate – DO IT!

HERE'S MY TOP TIP…

IT'S FOR

AND THIS IS HOW IT WORKS



Name ....

Address ....

..........**Postcode**..........

Send to:
TIPS EXTRA, **NGC**, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW or e-mail ngc@futurenet.co.uk

If you don't want to cut up your magazine, send a photocopy instead, and continue on another bit of paper if you run out of room. Or just buy two copies of the mag, so that we can afford to buy Geraint some English lessons.



in association with 

CARBON UNITS! YOU HAVE BEEN SELECTED FOR PARTICIPATION. COMPETE… OR BE DESTROYED.

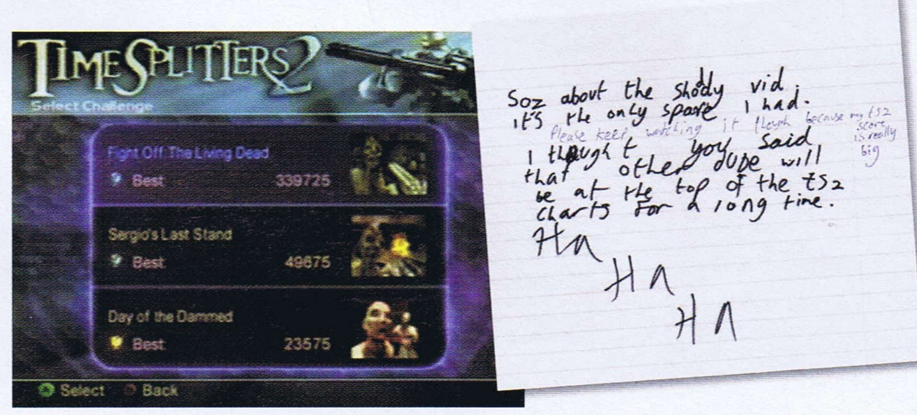
I'M THE BEST

1



Rain hammers down a rusty drainpipe, swiftly followed by an ornate, engraved, glittering glass dagger. Refracting as it falls, it bounces once and shatters on the asphalt, with the harsh, clipped sound of dinner party wine disasters. A pair of feet hit the ground next to it quietly – Japanese import-trainered feet. The rain on the alleyway turns a pale red, mingling with gutter effluvia and broken shards. Another victim, on his way to the big league in the sky.

Slowly licking his upper lip, a thin smirk forms quietly on the drawn face of Codename 48. Everything about him is quiet: even his thoughts emit no sound. This isn't the first I'm The Best 'entrant' to have his scores 'judged' in such a way. It won't be the last, either, he thinks, walking soundlessly towards the street. A hard form of proof if you don't even send in your address, let alone a video or a picture. But 48 does not require postal information to find his prey…



STAR PERFORMANCE

Lordy, how the abuse continues to flow. That letter up there's only one of countless examples we've received this month. Nice handwriting, by the way. "I could get a score like that with my eyes closed," taunts "The gaming genius that is **Ric Bullen**". Ouch. Well, we were of the opinion that 40-odd thousand was a pretty good score when it came to beheading the undead.

But as we said last month, we've got jobs to go to, wives to satisfy, and pigs to breed. We're going to set up a new Man's League for I'm The Best, where gaming prowess must be compensated for by evidence of leathery, calloused palms (caused by constant pickaxe, plough, or threshing machine – not joypad – use), a forehead whose every furrowed line tells a story of hardship and toil in the mines or fields, and a PhD in I Didn't Get Where I Am Today Studies, from the Hard Knocks School at the University of Life.

Anyway, since we didn't get a single specific entry for Star Performance this month, the gong's going to have to go to the aptly-named **Dave Every** of **Cheshire**, for his ubiquitous appearance in 11 out of 24 tables. We've been silently observing (young?) Mr Every's progress over the past few months, even cleverly misspelling his name with an extra E last month in an attempt to prompt some kind of written response. How many hours such a task took is anyone's guess, but we reckon he's some kind of long-haired, skiving student tea-fiend, skipping lectures to drink gallons of herbal infusions with one hand while playing *Tetris* with the other all day, like some kind of games monk. He most likely lives in a small algae-covered shed, surrounded by pizza boxes, retro consoles, and filthy underwear. Tsch. Still, he probably wears out dozens of joypads a month, which is why we're sending him a new one. Ciao!

2 HOW TO PROVE YOUR ACHIEVEMENT

When sending us evidence of your gaming achievements, it's useful to follow these steps…

PHOTOGRAPHS

If you're sending us evidence of the photographic variety:

1. Turn off the camera's flash (or cover it up) to prevent it from reflecting off the screen.
2. Draw the curtains to eradicate sunlight.
3. Use a fast film (200 or 400 ASA).
4. If you're using a digicam then use a slower shutter speed.
5. Point at the screen and click away.

PLEASE NOTE: In the past we've had experience of certain scamps 'fiddling' with their photographic evidence, so this time round we're being extra-specially (is that right?) careful. We would, in fact, welcome video evidence over photographic evidence. If, however, you can only send photos, be warned: any doubts over the legality of your entry will lead to instant disqualification, and jeering.

VIDEO

If you're going to be sending us the evidence that comes on a tape, follow these instructions carefully:

1. Plug the TV lead from the Gamecube into the Signal In socket of your video.
2. Connect the Signal Out socket on your video to your TV.
3. Find a spare channel on the video and search for the signal.
4. After completing and recording the challenge, rewind the tape and send it in.

3 HERE'S MY BEST PERFORMANCE…

NGC YOUR BEST PERFORMANCE

MARIO SUNSHINE
Best time on Il Piantissimo's Sand Sprint ....
Best time on Il Piantissimo's Crazy Climb ....

LUIGI'S MANSION
Total number of Gs ....
Time taken to beat final boss ....

ROGUE LEADER
Battle of Endor kills ....
Death Star Attack accuracy..........
Star Destroyer fastest time..........

WAVE RACE
Aspen Lake best race time ....
Lost Temple Lagoon stunt score ....
Southern Island lap time ....

SUPER SMASH BROS
Highest score in Home Run ....
Highest juggle combo..........
Quickest time in 100-man melee ....

SONIC 2
Juggernaut Level number of rings..........
Escape from the Military Base best time ....

TONY HAWK'S 3
The Foundry highest score ....
Canada highest trick combo. ....
Rio highest score ....

TIMESPLITTERS 2
Highest score in Fight Off the Living Dead ....
Best time in Pane in the Neck ....
Best time in Escape from Neo Tokyo ....

SUPER MONKEY BALL
Fastest time on Frozen Highway..........
Highest score on Monkey Target ....
Fastest time on Advanced Floor 2 ....

Name ....
....
Address..........
....
....
....
....
Postcode ....

Send to:
I'M THE BEST, **NGC** Magazine,
30 Monmouth Street,
Bath, BA1 2BW

If you don't want to cut up your magazine, send a photocopy instead, and continue on another bit of paper if you run out of room. Or just write with something other than finger-paints, or your bloody stumps.

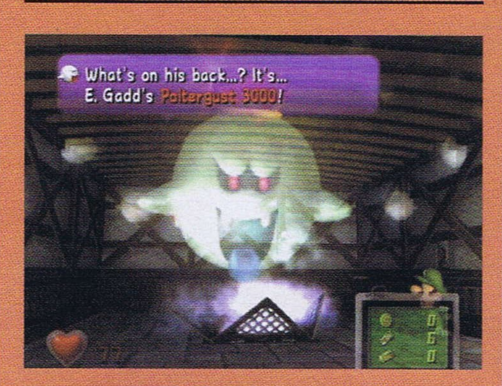
LUIGI'S MANSION





See how many Gs you can notch up at the end of the game.

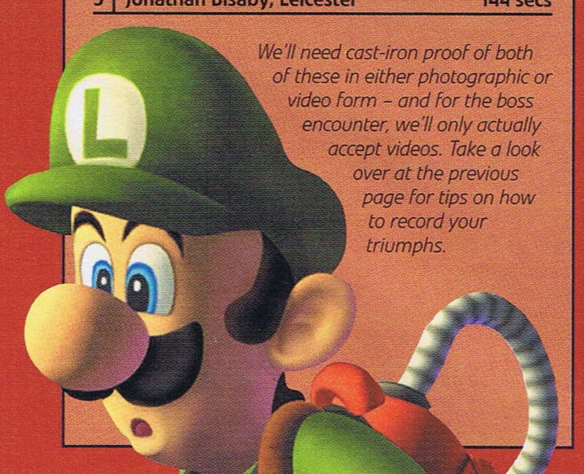
1	John Dawson, Hull	186,375,000G
2	Sean Hinton, Kidderminster	185,710,000G
3	Daniel Mitchell, East Sussex	184,440,000G
4	Jamie Butters, East Sussex	184,060,000G
5	Mark Richardson, Leeds	183,575,000G



See how long it takes you to dispose of the final boss.

1	Bent Eigil Sumelius, Norway	121 secs
2	Tim Wingate, Tyne & Wear	122 secs
3	Grover Mitchell, Newport	139 secs
4	Alex Gough, Rochdale	142 secs
5	Jonathan Bisaby, Leicester	144 secs

We'll need cast-iron proof of both of these in either photographic or video form – and for the boss encounter, we'll only actually accept videos. Take a look over at the previous page for tips on how to record your triumphs.



STAR WARS: ROGUE LEADER



Most kills on Battle of Endor (you must win at least a Bronze medal).

1	Adam Goodwin, Anglesey	274
2	Kevin Ibbotson, Dublin	241
3	Dave Every, Cheshire	221
4	Joe Newman, London	191
5	David Gamble, Antrim	175



Highest accuracy on Death Star Attack (video evidence only, please).

1	Kevin Ibbotson, Dublin	96%
2	Kieran Cornwell, London	93%
3	Chris Fletcher, Stockport	86%
4	Jack Gill, Northallerton	83%
5	Anthony Musson, Preston	82%

Fastest time achieved taking out the Star Destroyer in Razor Rendezvous.

1	Simon Thomas, Solihull	0:22
2	Gavin Maidment, Cheshire	0:23
3	Dave Every, Cheshire	0:24
4	Paul Bowers, Wolverhampton	0:32
5	Alan Dyer, Maidstone	0:33

On Death Star Attack, we don't want to see you shoot three TIEs with homing torpedoes for 100 per cent accuracy – that's for maggots. We want to see video footage of REAL skill. Pics are fine for the other two.

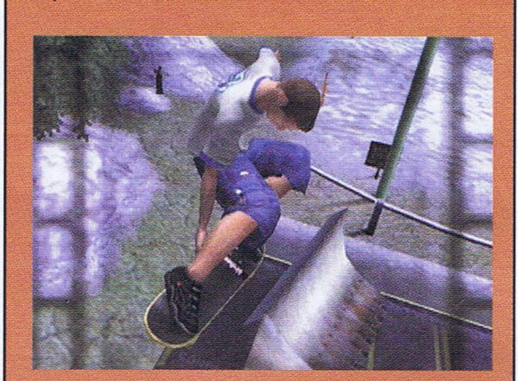
TONY HAWK'S 3





Highest point score on The Foundry level.

1	Andrew Nizinskyj, Barnsley	13,228,348
2	Lee Robinson, Notts	4,489,945
3	John Copeland, Co Durham	4,203,016
4	David Peacock, Co Durham	3,886,325
5	Mickey Ieronymides, St Albans	3,255,466



Highest trick combo on the Canada level.

1	Andrew Nizinskyj, Barnsley	8,195,915
2	Lee Robinson, Notts	4,489,945
3	David Peacock, Co Durham	3,886,325
4	Gary Lord, Hull	2,173,200
5	John Copeland, Co Durham	1,879,038

Highest score on the Rio level.

1	Andrew Nizinskyj, Barnsley	12,948,744
2	Daniel Rouse, High Wycombe	7,039,117
3	Mickey Ieronymides, St Albans	4,225,882
4	David Bennett, Isle of Man	4,095,129
5	Andrew Cooper, Surrey	3,786,550

Remember, Tony Hawk's 3 is blinkin' hard, so you'll need to put in the hours – once you have, get us your proof of the end screen in either photographic or, preferably, videographic form. Ta very much.

SEND YOUR ENTRIES TO... I'M THE BEST, NGC MAGAZINE, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW



WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM



Your best race time on Aspen Lake in Normal mode.

1	Paul Holmes, Edinburgh	0'21"144
2	Dave Every, Cheshire	1'00"890
3	John Dawson, Hull	1'01"614
4	Daniel Dunn, Boston	1'01"633
5	Frantzeskakis Dimitris, Greece	1'03"930



Your best stunt score on Lost Temple Lagoon.

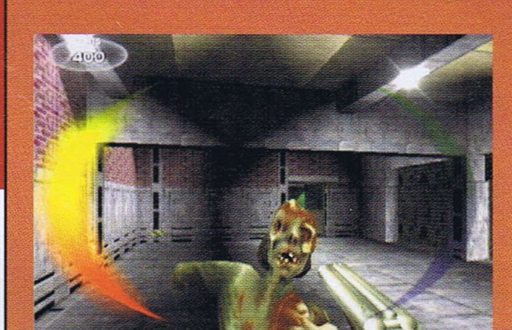
1	Steven Lockwood, Bradford	35,545
2	Ben Tatlow, London	33,160
3	Jon East, Manchester	26,254
4	Frantzeskakis Dimitris, Greece	11,019
5	John Copeland, Co Durham	10,624

Your best lap time on Southern Island in Normal mode.

1	John Dawson, Hull	0'16"106
2	Dave Every, Cheshire	0'16"276
3	Daniel Dunn, Boston	0'16"587
4	Andrew Cooper, Surrey	0'18"712
5	Benjamin Hayes, Berkshire	0'18"799

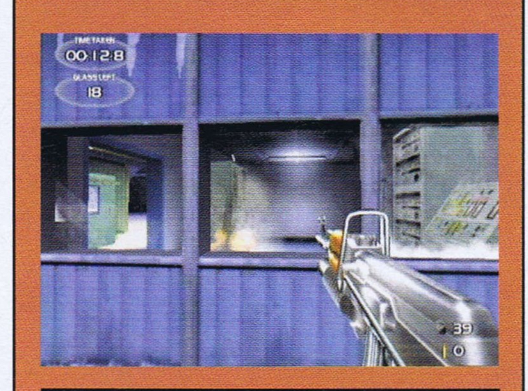
Fancy some? Again, we'll need cast-iron proof of your achievements – video is our choice medium, although we may also accept some photographic evidence, provided – of course – that it hasn't been altered or messed with in some way.

TIMESPLITTERS 2



Your highest score in the Fight Off the Living Dead challenge...

1	Dave Every, Cheshire	339,725
2	David Morris, Wallasey	187,850
3	Mark Johnson, Hampshire	176,075
4	Ruud Cremers, Netherlands	157,500
5	Gregg Sangster, Bexleyheath	156,025



Your best time in the Pane in the Neck challenge...

1	Ric Bullen, Knaresborough	9.2 secs
2	Ruud Cremers, Netherlands	10.3 secs
3	Brendan Doherty, Cheshire	10.6 secs
4	David Morris, Wallasey	11.7 secs
5	Steven McKeon, Middlesex	13.3 secs

Your best time in the Escape from Neo Tokyo challenge...

1	Lewis Voigtländer-Ford, Mltn Keynes	16 secs
2	Ric Bullen, Knaresborough	17 secs
3	Brendan Doherty, Cheshire	17.1 secs
4	Gregg Sangster, Bexleyheath	17.2 secs
5	Ruud Cremers, Netherlands	19.2 secs

The challenges in TS2 are some of the toughest around, so you'll need to keep your wits about you if you want to beat these scores, especially on the Fight Off the Living Dead challenge. A clear photo of the results screen will suffice for all three.

SONIC ADVENTURE 2





How many rings you can get at the end of the Juggernaut chase section.

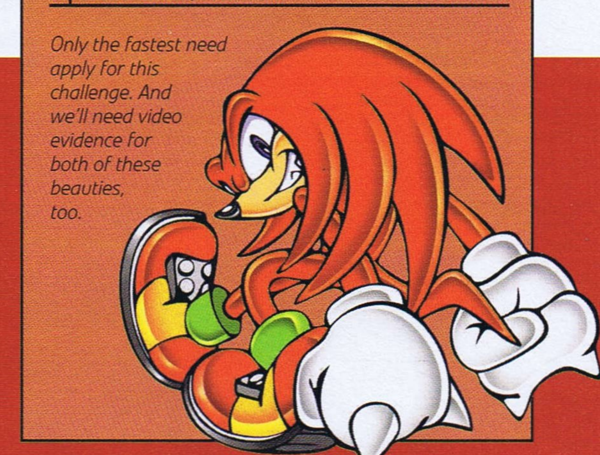
1	Jim Osborne, Staffordshire	453
2	William Thomas, Shropshire	440
3	Adam Ely, Weybridge	437
4	Tom Sherwood, Cheshire	413
5	David Smith, Bothwell	379



What time you can notch up on Escape from the Military Base.

1	David Waters, Essex	01:39:14
2	Jim Osborne, Staffordshire	01:42:27
3	Tom Sherwood, Cheshire	01:42:52
4	Barry Templeton, Kilmarnock	01:43:57
5	David Smith, Bothwell	01:46:70

Only the fastest need apply for this challenge. And we'll need video evidence for both of these beauties, too.

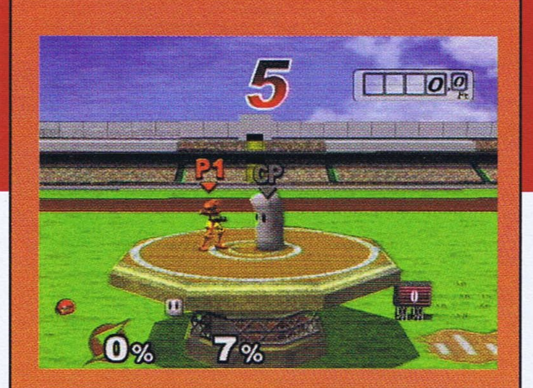




SEND YOUR ENTRIES TO... I'M THE BEST, **NGC** MAGAZINE, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW

SUPER SMASH BROS





How far can you hit the bag? We want to see your highest score in Home Run.

1	Ben Turner, Kent	974.3m
2	Dave Every, Cheshire	602.6m
3	David Smith, Bothwell	523.1m
4	Jody Van Wijk, Netherlands	500.1m
5	Gary Butle, Berkshire	492.2m



How many juggle combo hits can you get in before your foe hits the ground?

1	Dave Every, Cheshire	54
2	Ry Morgan, Moray	29
3	Tom Lyth, Manchester	25
3	Andrew Bell, Co Durham	22
4	Paul Kiniry, Co Cork	18

Your quickest time in 100-Man Melee, using Mario only.

1	Dean Hailstone, Tyne & Wear	02:29:06
2	Dave Every, Cheshire	02:32:73
3	Michael Newton, Welwyn Garden City	02:38:16
4	John Dawson, Hull	02:44:83
5	Andrew Bell, Co Durham	02:45:78

Just as there's more than one way to skin a cat, there's more than one way to smack a bag – which is why we want videoed evidence of your attempt at the first challenge. Same goes for the juggle combo challenge – although we'll accept pics for 100-man melee.

MARIO SUNSHINE





Your best time on Il Piantissimo's Sand Sprint (Gelato Beach).

1	Dean Hailstone, Tyne & Wear	10:35
2	John Dawson, Hull	10:40
3	Sean Hinton, Kidderminster	10:50
4	Michael Newton, Welwyn Garden City	11:67
5	Daniel Rouse, High Wycombe	13:63



Your best time in Il Piantissimo's Crazy Climb (Pianta Village).

1	Daniel Rouse, High Wycombe	16:80
2	Michael Newton, Welwyn Garden City	17:96
3	Sean Hinton, Kidderminster	21:55
4	Michael Armoire, Rochdale	24:50
5	Patrick Schultz, Austria	24:76

Two timed challenges from the best Mario game since the last one – videoed evidence is, as ever, preferable, but we'll accept photos as long as they clearly show the end of each challenge with your final score displayed. You heard.



SUPER MONKEY BALL





Your fastest time on the Frozen Highway stage in Monkey Race…

1	David Smith, Bothwell	0:54:55
2	Michael Rothwell, Wallasey	0:55:71
3	Tom Lyth, Manchester	1:27:74
4	Stephen Topple, Ipswich	1:27:50
5	Dave Every, Cheshire	1:28:36



Highest score on Monkey Target (with Wheel of Danger turned off).

1	Dave Every, Cheshire	8,970
2	Pavel Sikorsky, London	6,050
3	Adam Williams, Exeter	4,380
4	Will Prendergast, Berkshire	3,020
5	Michael Newton, Welwyn Garden City	2,020

Your fastest time on Advanced Floor 2 in the Main Game (Time Remaining).

1	Dave Every, Cheshire	54:85
2	David Smith, Bothwell	54:78
3	John Dawson, Hull	54:56
4	Martin Bristow, Anglesey	54:36
5	Michael Newton, Welwyn Garden City	54:12

We'll want a picture of your monkey crossing the finish line for the first challenge, but a simple picture of the results screen will suffice for the other two. And don't forget to turn the Wheel of Danger off for the second challenge – there's really no point. At all.

SEND YOUR ENTRIES TO… I'M THE BEST, NGC MAGAZINE, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW

30 MONMOUTH STREET/BATH/BA1 2BW

MAILBOX

EMAIL US!

Got something to say? Run out of stamps? Guards won't let you near a pen? Then log on to the interweb and 'get' us 'at'…

ngc@futurenet.co.uk

…right now! And if we're in the mood, we might even send you a reply.





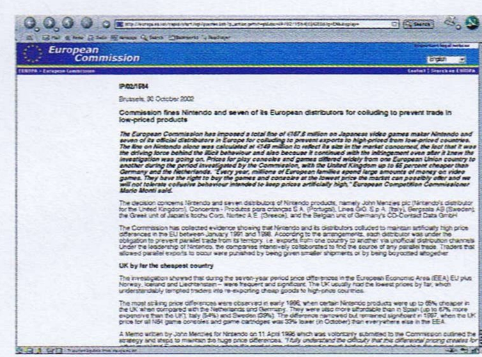
'Scoring the games'

When I look through my latest issue of **NGC**, I usually skip to the Reviews section. On an average month, I'll find scores of 80 and below. Most of the time, these are of highly anticipated games, so it is a kind of let-down to find such an average score. But when I look at the corresponding scores in other magazines to contrast, there is often a difference of opinion. The other mags will almost certainly give the game a much higher mark. In the case of *Starfox*, most of the other mags gave it around 90, while **NGC** gave it around 70. This is what confuses me. Are the other magazines just giving the games high marks because they deserve high marks, or is it that the reviewers lack the confidence to give low marks to a game that's highly anticipated? I personally don't know what to think. Most of my mates say that the **NGC** reviewers are stingy, and look only for the game's worst points. The question is: is **NGC** giving games too low a mark, or are the other mags scoring the games too highly? I can't afford to try out the latest games, so I rely on reviews to give me an idea of whether or not I should buy them. One thing's for certain, though: If I buy something that's got rave reviews from **NGC**, I know I'll be getting the créme-de-la-créme of games.
Daniel Rouse, via email

***I think you answered your question in your last point there. If a game is good enough to get a high mark in NGC, you can be sure it's worth spending your £40 on. We often get letters expressing disappointment that we've given a 'low' mark to a game somebody has been saving to buy, but we'd rather tell you the truth. We aim simply to be honest and thorough with our reviews, which means we'll always give a game a realistic score.* Ed**

'Let's face it'

What happened to the money that Nintendo were fined for price-fixing? Who got it? What do they intend to do with it, and will it ever be passed on to the consumer in some form or another? Let's face it, it was us that paid the high prices for those NES and SNES games.
Anthony Timoney, Northants


European Commission

IP/02/1584

Brussels, 30 October 2002

Commission fines Nintendo and seven of its European distributors for colluding to prevent trade in low-priced products

The European Commission has imposed a total fine of €167.8 million on Japanese video games maker Nintendo and seven of its official distributors in Europe for colluding to prevent exports to high-priced from low-priced countries. The fine on Nintendo alone was calculated at €149 million to reflect its size in the market concerned, the fact that it was the driving force behind the illicit behaviour and also because it continued with the infringement even after it knew the investigation was going on. Prices for play consoles and games differed widely from one European Union country to another during the period investigated by the Commission, with the United Kingdom up to 65 percent cheaper than Germany and the Netherlands. "Every year, millions of European families spend large amounts of money on video games. They have the right to buy the games and consoles at the lowest price the market can possibly offer and we will not tolerate collusive behaviour intended to keep prices artificially high," European Competition Commissioner Mario Monti said.

The decision concerns Nintendo and seven distributors of Nintendo products, namely John Menzies plc (Nintendo's distributor for the United Kingdom), Concentra - Produtos para crianças S.A. (Portugal), Linea GIG S.p.A. (Italy), Bergsala AB (Sweden), the Greek unit of Japan's Itochu Corp, Nortec A.E. (Greece), and the Belgian unit of Germany's CD-Contact Data GmbH.

The Commission has collected evidence showing that Nintendo and its distributors colluded to maintain artificially high price differences in the EU between January 1991 and 1998. According to the arrangements, each distributor was under the obligation to prevent parallel trade from its territory, i.e. exports from one country to another via unofficial distribution channels. Under the leadership of Nintendo, the companies intensively collaborated to find the source of any parallel trade. Traders that allowed parallel exports to occur were punished by being given smaller shipments or by being boycotted altogether.

UK by far the cheapest country

The investigation showed that during the seven-year period price differences in the European Economic Area (EEA) EU plus Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein – were frequent and significant. The UK usually had the lowest prices by far, which understandably tempted traders into re-exporting cheap goods to high-price countries.

The most striking price differences were observed in early 1996, when certain Nintendo products were up to 65% cheaper in the UK when compared with the Netherlands and Germany. They were also more affordable than in Spain (up to 67% more expensive than the UK), Italy (54%) and Sweden (39%). The difference narrowed but remained significant in 1997, when the UK price for all N64 game consoles and game cartridges was 33% lower (in October) than everywhere else in the EEA.

A Memo written by John Menzies for Nintendo on 11 April 1996 which was voluntarily submitted to the Commission outlined the strategy and steps to maintain the huge price differences. "I fully understand the difficulty that this differential pricing creates for

△ **The website of the European Commission – the best source for up-to-the-minute videogame news.**

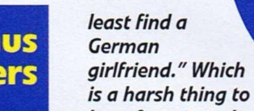
***Good question. The EU's argument is that they've done us a favour by ensuring fairer prices in the future, which is nice. And all that cash will buy some splendid hotel suites in Brussels, so everyone's a winner. But then the fine hasn't actually been paid yet. The appeals process will undoubtedly drag on for years, while Nintendo's executives wring their hands and hope that the pressure of important Euro-work, such as straightening bananas and making sure you get the same number of strawberries in every punnet, will make the bureaucrats forget all about it.* Ed**

'Keep him in Germany'

So that's why you booted Greener out. In issue 75's Talk Time, he tried to impress us with his German skills. I quote: "Wie komme ich am besten zum bahnhof, bitte?" Very good, but one very basic rule of German is that nouns have CAPITAL LETTERS! And "Bahnhof" is a noun – it means "Station", which brings me on to my next point. Why was Greener asking his way to the station? Keep him in Germany, that's what I say.
Ben Case, Surrey

***Hmm. Perhaps he wanted to catch a train. Greener's boss at Nintendo, Marko Hein, picked up on another piece of shoddy German from that article – "Ich habe viel gelernen," which, he told us, "Is absolutely wrong." Marko also added, "I think he has to spend a bit more overtime in his German lessons, or at least find a German girlfriend." Which is a harsh thing to hear from your boss, but fair comment.* Ed**





Bonus Letters

What was the special thing Sega said would be in the last Dreamcast off the production line?
Kingloo, Luxembourg
***Geraint's broken heart. The soppy Sega fanboy.* Ed**

Nobody really cares if you're Johnny Gringo or Jean-Paul Froggy
Mark Baker, Solihull
***Hai, so desu.* Ed**

I'm from Ballinasloe, Co Galway, you see, and all we have here are sheep and that's it. If another human being comes into this town we naturally think this poor person is lost, because why would you want to come to Ballinasloe? WHY?
Thomas Cullen, Ballinasloe
***I wouldn't want to be in your shoes…* Ed**

I've just realised who the voice of Fox from *Dinosaur Planet* is! It's Jonathan from *Perfect Dark*! I knewn I'd heard it somewhere before.
Luke Maloney, via email
***And you've invented a brand new word, too.* Ed**

Proving there's more to GameCube than kiddie games, *Evil 0* brings the familiar brain-snacking fun of its half-dozen predecessors. This time, players can switch betw… …are better suited for the … one or the other. ★★★★ (DG)

In its glory days on the NES, *Metroid* was one of the first man-in-cybersuit-whomping-aliens first-person shooters. This 3-D update brings a winning blend of old-school feel and modern visuals, and will hook veteran and neophyte gamers alike. ★★★★ (RMP)

With a 007 film in theaters, it would have … easy to simply recreate the same … original plot with car chases through Tokyo, underwater levels, mis… …person, and seri… sions in … ★★★ (PS)

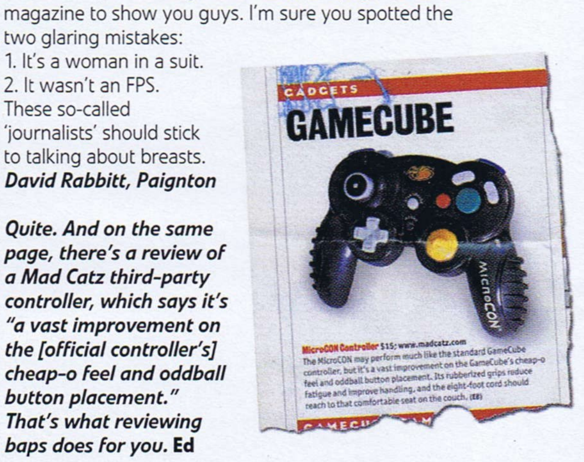
'Talking about breasts'

So there I was, waiting two hours for a haircut, when I noticed an American copy of FHM on the barber's table. As I'm half-heartedly flicking through it, a Gamecube section catches my eye. I read the *Metroid Prime* review and find myself so disgusted, I steal the page out of the magazine to show you guys. I'm sure you spotted the two glaring mistakes:

1. It's a woman in a suit.
2. It wasn't an FPS.

These so-called 'journalists' should stick to talking about breasts.
David Rabbitt, Paignton

***Quite. And on the same page, there's a review of a Mad Catz third-party controller, which says it's "a vast improvement on the [official controller's] cheap-o feel and oddball button placement." That's what reviewing baps does for you.* Ed**


GADGETS

GAMECUBE

MicroCON Controller $15; www.madcatz.com
The MicroCON may perform much like the standard GameCube controller, but it's a vast improvement on the GameCube's cheap-o feel and oddball button placement. Its rubberized grips reduce fatigue and improve handling, and the eight-foot cord should reach to that comfortable seat on the couch. (EB)

'Multiple Links'

Petty correction time. In issue 77 you mentioned that *Wind Waker* had 'reinvented' the Zelda myth to allow for multiple Links existing in different time periods. This theory has actually been around for a long time – way back in *LOZ 2* it was made explicit that the name Zelda was passed down through the generations of the royal family. Likewise, Link and Impa are hereditary names. Ganon(dorf) is the same one the whole way through, though. Briefly, my interpretation goes as follows. The first game chronologically is *Ocarina*. It features the



HONOURABLE MENTIONS
Thanks to everyone else who wrote, and emailed this month. You included: Alex O'Brien, via email; Max Elston, Jersey; Mark Nisbet, Galston; Thomas Reekie, Lichfield; Christopher Lewis, Twickenham; William Erskine, Denmead; Andrew Sibley, Isle of Wight; Steven Butler, Belfast; Daniel Brady, via email; Anhwa Griffiths, via email; Stephen Cronin, West Ealing; Kate Fletcher, Biggin Hill; Matt Brooks, Bushey; Tim Vickerman, via email; Gary Dougill, Coventry; Andreas Roren Strand, Norway; Daniel Gaine, Seaton; Gary Cocker, via email; Miko Rumsby, via email; Anders Christian, via email; Adam Reardon, via email; David Walker, Hull; Martin Wright, via email; Alun MacRae, via email; Trevor Forshaw, via email; Harry Rowe, via email; Myra Dooley, via

original Link and Zelda. *Majora* follows soon after this and stars the same Link. Then there's a long gap before the first *Legend of Zelda* game. The Link and Zelda here are descendants of the originals. The same Link goes on to appear in *Adventure of Link*, which has the first Zelda still alive under a Sleeping Beauty curse. This Link is also the one in *Link's Awakening*. Then there's another big gap before the final game, *Link to the Past*, and the third Link. Where the new game fits into this chronology I'm not sure yet.
Greg A Lamb, via email

Thanks for clearing that up. We'll try to unravel the whole twisted story in time for the PAL review. Ed

'Cockney accents'

In **NGC** issue 75, you wrote, "Cockney accents in the London level are awful," in your *THPS4* review. Do you mean that the cockney accents in the game are awfully done, or cockney accents are awful in general?
Jacob Matthew, Nottingham

Gor blimey, guv'nor. Apples and pears, chim-chim-cheroo, and gawd bless the Royal Faaamily. Cough. Ed

'Other formats'

I have recently heard that the five Capcom games that have been announced for the Gamecube are rumoured to be released for other formats as well. I thought that making them exclusive was the idea. I know *Resident Evil* will be exclusive, but what about the rest?
James Cullen, Haverhill

According to Capcom, the original announcement was misquoted, and it's "possible" that the games may appear on other formats in the future, as long as they do well enough on Gamecube. Possible, remember, not certain. They're not necessarily being developed with other formats in mind. Ed

'All their money'

It's great news that Nintendo are developing a new console. The even better news is that the intended release date is 2005, so that they can compete directly with the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 2. If Nintendo can continue the tradition of high quality through to the next console generation with Gamecube 2, then they have a good chance of winning back the videogames market. However if they continue with the tradition of missing deadlines then Gamecube 2 will sink faster than the Titanic, and this time it might take Nintendo with it. Sega only survived two unpopular consoles before being forced to retire from the hardware market, so how long can Nintendo hang on without turning things around? Having said that, what do Nintendo have to gain from making another console, if (as you said a few issues ago) they actually lose money on the machines? If Nintendo make all their money from software, why don't they simply make games for another machine?
Tim Mullett, via email

Making games for other machines would be lucrative, but not nearly as lucrative as controlling the rights to the machine itself. That way Nintendo make money from their own games, along with everybody else's too, by charging third-parties a licensing fee on every copy they manufacture. Also, Nintendo is a massively cash-rich company ($6.6bn in cash holdings, finance fans), and can afford to speculate on further rounds of console wars. Ed

Bonus Letters

I would just like to announce (if you haven't already heard).
Stephen Giles, Dublin
Stop the presses! Ed

Did the future get trodden in the mud under one of my PlayStation's tyres?
Rob, Wales
No, it was under your N64's tractor treads Ed

Demanding minds need to know!.
Chris Gregg, via email
That's the truth. Ed

In the close quarters of the office, Jud would be better off with an MG34 as it's lighter but still effective against police body armour.
Gary Dougill,Coventry
Don't get him started again. Ed

It might sound a bit pathetic now.
William McDonnell-Bond, via email
You're right, it does. Ed

I can't get rid of the image of Mario in a black suit, dropping some old guy in to the sea, with concrete shoes on.
'The Captain', via email
Now I can't either. Ed


△ Gamecube sits and ponders the intricate weaving found on expensive hotel bedspreads. Fabulous detail.

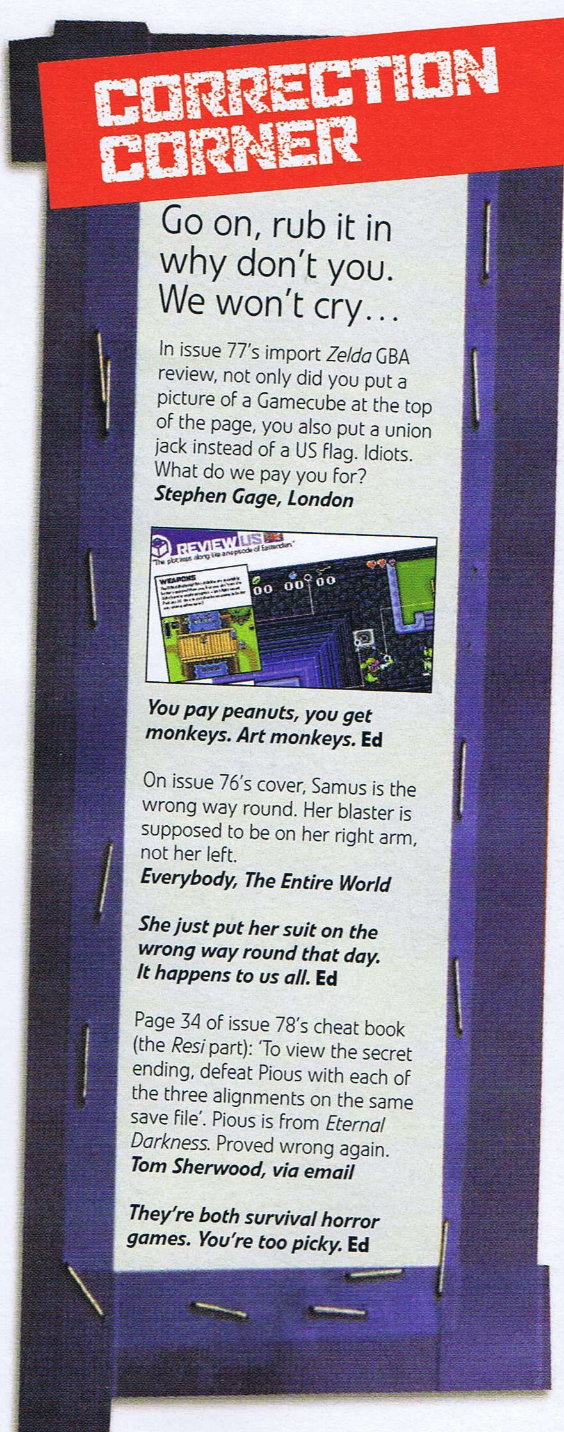
'An entire series'

I think that everyone should lay off Nintendo's advertising for the Gamecube – they've done a respectable job thus far. There has been a constant advertising presence since it was launched, especially on Sky channels. When *Sunshine* was released, the advert was played during every break on several channels, such as CNX, for a good few weeks. Nintendo have sponsored an entire series of Farscape on the Sci-Fi Channel, with the slogan "Keep it cubed, keep it sci-fi" playing before and after every advert break. *Eternal Darkness, Starfox, Pikmin, Rogue Leader, Mario Sunshine, Wave Race*, and several other games have been advertised since the console's launch, which is more than the N64 had in its entire lifetime! In fact there have been more Cube adverts in the past few months than there have PS2 ones. I'm not saying that Nintendo's advertising strategy has been perfect (the Des Lynam purple 'tache is proof of that), and the Gamecube has yet to sponsor a major sporting event such as the PS2 and the Champions' League. But at least Nintendo are trying now, which is more than can be said when the N64 was launched!
Christopher Martin, via email

You're talking about a show with less than 100,000 viewers, compared to hundreds of millions all over world for the Champions' League. And did anyone see the Metroid Prime ads in some of the men's lifestyle mags (er, and us last issue. Cough)? The best game of the year, made to sound unspeakably dull by the worst ad in ages. Ed




△ The original Gamecube TV ad was a bit surreal, featuring people crunched into glass boxes and a woman wearing a blood-filled cube. Do you get it now?



CORRECTION CORNER

Go on, rub it in why don't you. We won't cry...

In issue 77's import *Zelda* GBA review, not only did you put a picture of a Gamecube at the top of the page, you also put a union jack instead of a US flag. Idiots. What do we pay you for?
Stephen Gage, London

You pay peanuts, you get monkeys. Art monkeys. Ed

On issue 76's cover, Samus is the wrong way round. Her blaster is supposed to be on her right arm, not her left.
Everybody, The Entire World

She just put her suit on the wrong way round that day. It happens to us all. Ed

Page 34 of issue 78's cheat book (the *Resi* part): 'To view the secret ending, defeat Pious with each of the three alignments on the same save file'. Pious is from *Eternal Darkness*. Proved wrong again.
Tom Sherwood, via email

They're both survival horror games. You're too picky. Ed

email; Patrick McCarthy, Carlisle; Conor McSweeney, via email; Matt Jones, via email; Caradoc Gibson-Robinson, via email; James King, via email; Daniel Duval, via email; Phillip Booth, via email; Jon Mansour, Liverpool; Michael Topping, Worthing ; Matty Foster, Ilkeston; David Catena, via email; and too many others to mention!

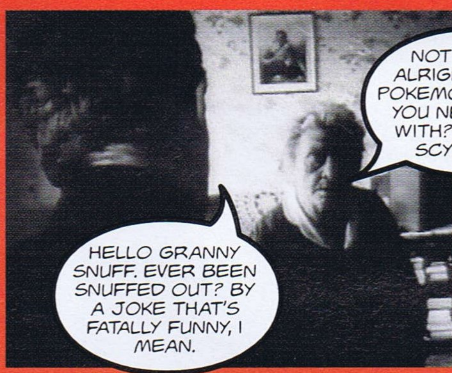
Grintendo!

EVERY MONTH, WE'LL TEST YOUR JOKES ON A FAMOUS CELEBRITY. IF THEY GIVE IT THE THUMBS UP, YOU WIN A GAME (OF OUR CHOICE). DEAL?
THIS MONTH: BARRY GANNON, CAITHNESS

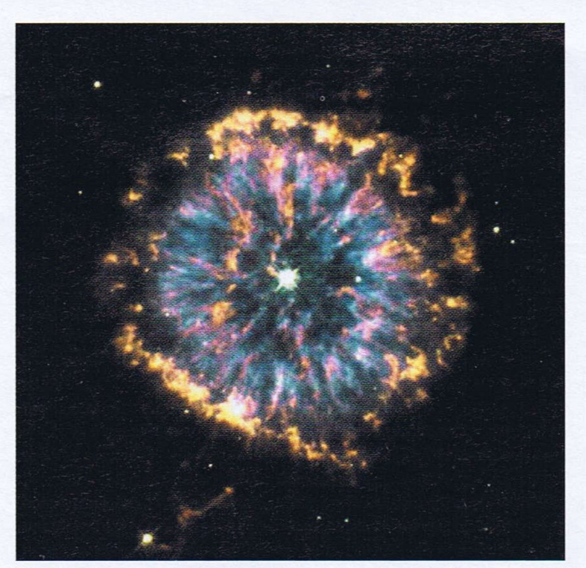
WRITE TO... GRINTENDO/MAILBOX/NGC/30 MONMOUTH STREET/BATH/BA1 2BW/OR EMAIL NGC@FUTURENET.CO.UK

NGC SPECIAL GUEST MAN, from Belgian serial killer flick MAN BITES DOG!





Unsuccessful!
FUNNY, AM I? WELL, HAVING FORCE-FED THE OLD BAG A YEAR'S SUPPLY OF LAXATIVES, I'D HAVE TO AGREE. FLUSH, GRANNY SNUFF! FLUSH!


△ The Glowing Eye of NGC, which was launched into deep space by our advertising execs after an all-night brainstorming session.

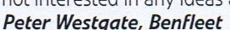
'Clouds of gas'

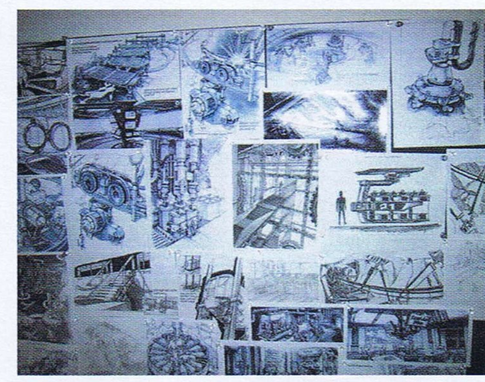
This is so cool – check out the picture. It's called The Glowing Eye of NGC 6751. NGC! It's named after your magazine! Apparently, it's a planetary nebula formed by clouds of gas ejected from the central star.
Simon Clark, Worcestershire

Yep. See, Nintendo? That's how to advertise. Ed

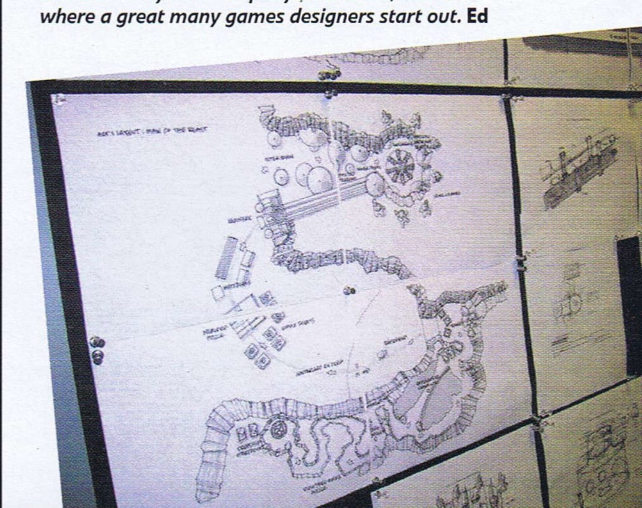
'Sketches and notes'

Once I leave college I hope to get into game design, or something along those lines. I have an idea for a game which I've been working on for about three to four years now. I've created several main characters, each with individual stories, and I've envisaged levels and weapons. I've been working on this so hard, I've also had the idea for the next two games after it. The reason I'm writing to you is because it's all well and good having an idea, but it's going nowhere. I've made sketches and notes, but I don't have the technology, the funding, or the ability to make it into a game (or at least a game of the standard I want it to be). I've asked countless game companies to see if they can help me, or advise me what to do, and every single one has turned around and said; "We are sorry, we can't help due to our policy of secrecy," or; "We do not accept ideas from anyone outside our team," or; "We are not interested in any ideas at this time." What can I do?
Peter Westgate, Benfleet




△ A tiny part of an entire corridor at Blizzard, filled with unused concept art. *This* is what it takes to make a game.

Judging by the letters we receive, there are plenty of people in the same boat. Unfortunately very few games companies will even look at unsolicited ideas, because of the possibility that they might be already working on or considering something similar, which could potentially leave them open to future legal action. Even in the unlikely event they actually opened your proposal, there's little chance of anyone giving you the resources to make it into a game. Unless you're a programmer or artist, your best bet is to join a company as a tester, which is where a great many games designers start out. Ed



SO TELL ME THIS...

The All-Knowing Brain applies the Power of Think to your questions.

1. Any news on a UK release of *Animal Crossing*?
2. How much of the memory card does *Animal Crossing* take up?
3. Has the *Hobbit* game been binned or what?
4. When is *Zelda* going to be released over here?
Harry Rowe, Kenley

1. Still no luck there.
2. All of it, which is why it comes with a free memory card.
3. No, it's still very much on. The screenshots arrived a bit late to make it in this issue though…
4. 3rd May.

1. Any chance of putting demo discs on the magazine?
2. Will you bring back Skill Club?
Simon Mason, Dorset

1. That's about as likely as Elvis crash-landing his UFO on top of the Loch Ness Monster.
2. If enough people want it back. Write in and tell us, folks.

1. What are Retro studios doing, now that *Metroid Prime* is done and dusted?
2. Is the infamous puppet-based game *Marionette* still going ahead? There's been no news for ages.
3. How much will the Gamecube modem cost?
Simon Harris, Plymouth

1. The great news is that they're hard at work on the sequel.
2. We haven't heard a peep out of Nintendo. They often research ideas and either put them on hold for future hardware, or take the best bits and make them into something completely different. That's probably what's happened to Marionette.
3. At the time of writing, the price listed on Amazon is a whopping £34.99, which (if it's correct) is a serious mistake. It's unlikely to be a success if it costs much more than a tenner.

1. Is there a *Fire Emblem* or *Earthbound* game coming to Gamecube?
2. When is *A Link to The Past* out on Game Boy Advance?
David Keeling, Ireland

1. Not that we're aware of right now. There's a new Fire Emblem on the way for GBA, and we wouldn't be surprised to see a GC version in the future. But the cancellation of the Mother 3 N64 game left Earthbound's creator, Shigesato Itoi, as deflated as you'd expect after devoting six years of his life to it. It seems unlikely to be resurrected.
2. 28th March.

1. Will you be able to get a cat in *Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life*?
2. How exactly do you raise children, if you know what I mean?
3. Is *Metroid Prime* too hard?
Dave Harris, via email

1. Hope so. The N64 version was disappointingly anti-cat.
2. Plant them in a field with the vegetables and make sure you water them every day.
3. According to Geraint, it's much easier than it looks, although to have heard him screaming at the TV while fighting the last couple of bosses in the US version, you wouldn't believe it. But then, we do like to refer to him as Mr J N Skillz around here…


NEXT MONTH
And you thought this issue was something sweet...
BURNOUT 2
World-first review of the Gamecube version of this astonishing racer. Pedal to the metal!
VIEWTIFUL JOE
Exclusive first play of Capcom's superhero stunner!
PLUS! The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker hits the UK, plus Splinter Cell, Wario World, Skies of Arcadia and another great free gift…
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On sale Tuesday 15th April



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LEARNING JAPANESE

Shedding the light of the Rising Sun on the mysteries of import gaming.

People will tell you that it is impossible to learn Japanese from games, but if you learn a smattering of Japanese, you can at least progress through menus. And if you learn some grammar with the aid of books or a language course, you can pick up a lot more vocabulary from games. To be able to read basic text, download kana tables (hiragana and katakana) from the internet. These Japanese syllabaries are not so hard to learn, and can be picked up in a few weeks. If you're serious about learning the language, we recommend a copy of Ultimate Japanese. It's the most concise and comprehensive guide to learning Japanese available.



Rachel Ryan – Japanese games specialist and guardian of the mysteries of the inscrutable orient – takes you through the basics…

YOU CAN KANJI! Some of the most common kanji you'll find in games

買	buy	泊	stay (at inn)	刀	sword	上 下 右 左	up/down/right/left – look for these in beat-'em-up manuals – they may be describing special moves.
売	sell	休	rest	力	strength; power		
対	versus	魔法	magic	武	military; attack (power); weapon		
村	village	移動	manoeuvre	防	defend; defence	北 南 東 西	north/south/east/west
人	person	攻撃	attack	伝説	legend	十	Ten, but it can also refer to the directional control on a joypad.
町	town	道具	item	外伝	side story		
城	castle	装備	equip	完	the end		
店	shop	鎧	armour	勝	win; victory		
宿	inn	盾	shield	負	you lose		

NAVIGATING MENUS

The most common in-game selection is the yes/no response:

JAPANESE TEXT	PRONUNCIATION	ENGLISH
はい	HA I	YES
いいえ	I I E	NO

Note how the pronunciation 'I' (clipped, as in 'miss') is common to every occurance of the equivalent Japanese symbol. This is because the two Japanese 'alphabets' (the one used here is hiragana) are phonetic, not pictorial.

Here's how to recognise a prompt to save, load or start a game:

JAPANESE TEXT	PRONUNCIATION	ENGLISH
セーブ	SE I BU	SAVE
ロード	RO O DO	LOAD
スタート	SU TA A TO	START

(Note that the — symbol means to elongate the previous vowel.)

Be wary of selecting はい *(yes) the second time you see* セーブ *in the body of text, as the game is most likely asking if you want to overwrite a previous file.*

The Japanese text for the above options is in katakana, which is a syllabary (a set of characters representing syllables) mainly used for foreign words. The pronunciations are approximations of the English. Katakana allows you to discern many words, including names of characters and locations.

AT THE SHOPS

Here's a table of common terms needed in shops. Shops in games, that is. We've also given the same words in simple hiragana, which is what you'll see in GBA titles, where the screen resolution won't support kanji.

JAPANESE TEXT	HIRAGANA	PRONUNCIATION	MEANING
買う	かう	KA U	BUY
売る	うる	URU	SELL
出る	でる	DE RU	LEAVE
町に出る	まちにでる	MACHI NI DERU	LEAVE (TO TOWN)
装備しますか	そうびしますか	SOUBI SHIMASU KA?	EQUIP ITEM?

You may also see 買いに来た *or* 売りに来た *– I came to buy/sell respectively, but the kanjis* 買 *= buy and* 売 *= sell are common to most games. Learning these symbols can help avoid confusion.*

SAVING AND LOADING Here's how to do it in Kanji…

JAPANESE TEXT	PRONUNCIATION	ENGLISH
記	KI ROKU	RECORD
録	NIK KI	DIARY

The script here is in kanji – complex characters borrowed from Chinese. While the kana syllabaries of Japanese are like learning an alphabet, most sentences will spell key words in pictographic kanji. There are around 2,000 kanjis in common use. Fortunately, many games, such as those aimed at children and most GBA releases, don't have any kanji.

THE EVOLUTION OF...
CRIME

Hitman, hmm? Nasty business, especially on a Nintendo console. But who sowed the seeds of this criminal behaviour?

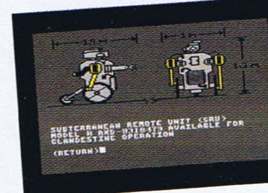
1 WANTED: MONTY MOLE

Rap sheet: Broke through picket lines during the miners' strike of 1984, which, while not exactly a crime, roused the anger of miners' leader Arthur Scargill, who appeared (involuntarily) as the game's boss.
Sentence: Let off with a caution and several sequels.



2 HACKER

Rap sheet: Cracking security on a corporate computer system, long before the internet was invented. Still a crime, mind. Still a crime.
Sentence: 17 years, wandering around in a confused and befuddled state. Did anyone ever finish this game? As if.



3 JACK THE NIPPER

Rap sheet: Caused mayhem, generally via the malicious use of a pea-shooter. Also implicated in the destruction of a factory, which is a slightly more serious offence.
Sentence: Nappy rash. Jack was punished for his terrorist antics by being made to walk around in piss-sodden Pampers.

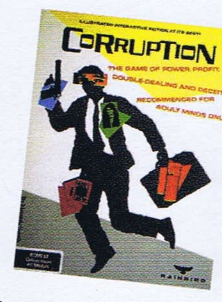


4 JACK THE RIPPER

Rap sheet: The multiple murderer with the heart of gold, beloved by prostitutes, Michael Caine, and east London tour guides. The first 18-rated game (for its sensationalist theme and gory 'graphics').
Sentence: Jack, you are convicted of being utter crap, and the company behind your 'game' is hereby sentenced to bankruptcy. Clear the court.

5 CORRUPTION

Rap sheet: Become a yuppie, drive a BMW, and find interesting ways to deal with various back-stabbing colleagues. All in a day's work for Mr Red Braces and his intensely irritating Sloane Ranger mates.
Sentence: Live it up until the stock market crashes, then leap from the top of the Lloyds building when the bailiffs repossess your flashy apartment. Ho ho.



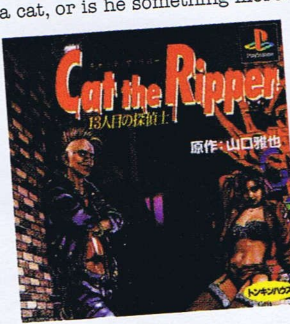
6 GRAND THEFT AUTO

Rap sheet: Run down innocent civilians like dogs in the street. Shoot cops, sell drugs, run a protection racket, and steal a few hundred cars. Raised the stakes for videogame violence.
Sentence: Trial by tabloid, notoriety, and two of the biggest-selling sequels ever.



7 CAT THE RIPPER

Rap sheet: Lewdness! Exploitation! Blood! Murder! Is Cat the Ripper actually a cat, or is he something more... sinister?
Sentence: Committed to remain in Japan, forever and ever.





8 DRIVER

Rap sheet: Claims to be on the level, but how many undercover cops drive hitmen to assassinations, wait outside with the engine running, then ferry them back to a safehouse for drinks and canapes?
Sentence: A Gamecube sequel, no less.

9 HOOLIGANS

Rap sheet: Possibly the most offensive game ever made – an RTS in which you control a rampaging gang of lager-fuelled thugs, destroying football stadiums, smashing cars, and brawling with rival supporters.
Sentence: A season ticket to Cardiff.



NGC TOP10



NON-LETHAL WEAPONS FOR THE GAMECUBE VERSION OF HITMAN 2

1. **BUBBLE WRAP** Even the most vigilant guard can't resist stopping to pop every bubble, while the Hitman sneaks past unnoticed.
2. **BIRDSEED** Left in a neat pile. When a guard stops to eat it, Hitman can drop an ACME 1,000lb anvil on his head.
3. **JAWBREAKER** Attempting to crack the solid sugary shell of this spicy cinnamon confection results in an expensive visit to the dentist.
4. **LAUGHING GAS** Pumped through the air-conditioning vents of an enemy base, turning its occupants into a zombified BBC1 sitcom audience.
5. **DELHI BELLY** An aromatic king prawn biryani that's been left to mature in the sun for a couple of days. Instant sloppy results.
6. **RED SHELL** Homes in on the target directly ahead. Alternatively, the rarer blue spiny version is guaranteed to hit the boss.
7. **FOOTBALL BOOT** To be chucked, Fergie-style, in the face of the enemy leader, thus forcing him to speed off in his Ferrari, upset.
8. **CLERKS** A riotous low-budget comedy in which undermotivated convenience store workers play hockey and talk about Star Wars.
9. **THE HAIRY SIDE** A hand with so much masculine hair on the back, enemies quake at the sight of it, like Little Mo in Eastenders.
10. **NOVELTY GUN** Instead of bullets, a red flag with the word BANG! on it pops out. Causes mild distress. Guaranteed to get you arrested at an airport.

JAPANESE DREAM SUPER NEWS

...in association with Tokyopia.com

Each month, errant games producer Justin Keeling brings you hot gaming news and gossip from the beating heart of Japan!

△ The big queue: busier than Clearance Price Frosty Jack Day at your local Londis.

Game Boy Advance SP MADNESS!



It began at 10pm. Silently they came. With plastic parkas and rolled up copies of Famitsu, they lined the streets, waiting.

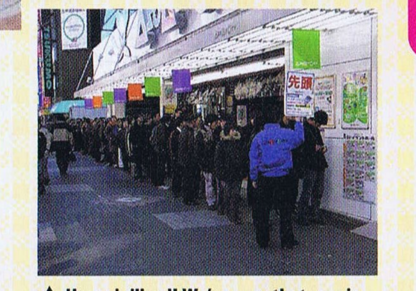
By midnight the city's three biggest game shops – Akihabara's Asobit, Shinjuku's Yodobashi Camera, and Hibiya's Bic Camera – were under siege. Why? A new Nintendo console. Cold though the night was, throngs of gamers were there to collect.

Asobit claimed nearly 200 line members outside its flagship Akihabara store, while Bic Camera did one better by enticing nearly 300 devotees to brave the snow before opening time. But it looks like the record goes to Shinjuku's Yodobashi Camera, with over 400 eager gamers queuing in advance. Hats off.

"I've been very surprised by its popularity," commented Kenichi Toyoda, at Nintendo Japan. "Our expectation was to sell two million units by the end of March, and we're approaching that level already."

Toyoda apologised for the lack of supply following the launch. At the time of writing, the handheld was still nowhere to be found across Tokyo. Maybe those queue-mongers had the right idea after all. Bugger.





△ How civilised! We're sure that guy in the blue shell suit's 'packing' 'heat'.



△ 'Excited' punters road-test the not-so-new, but somehow very blue, GBA SP.

MINI-MONI NEWS EXPRESS



★ Senior retail executives in Japan were recently given a sneak presentation of the progress of *Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles*. With four-player simultaneous play and real-time action, the action RPG from Square currently looks closer to SNES classic *Secret of Mana* than the cinematic PlayStation *FF* games. Japanese folk singer Yae will be supplying the game's title track.

★ In other *FF*-related news, the GBA SP launch title *Final Fantasy Tactics Advance* sold over 225,000 copies in its first week alone, and was given a Gold award in Japanese game bible Famitsu. Bet Square's happy to be back, eh?



WHAT'S HOT

- POKÉMON SAPPHIRE & RUBY – OVER 4 MILLION SOLD AND COUNTING!
- Soul Calibur II's stunning rendition of Link
- Ridge Racer 6 for GC
- Pikmin 2, Animal Crossing 2 and Starfox Armada for GC
- Famitsu's mediocre score for Metroid Prime
- N-Gage
- Sega's shoddy handling of PSO Online in Japan
- MEGATON

WHAT'S NOT

LUDICROUS JAPANESE GAME OF THE MONTH

Hideo Kojima's MY SUN



Hideo Kojima has finally gone bonkers...

The tactical-espionage meister has hinted that his next (non-*Metal Gear* related) project will utilise the GBA-GC link, although so far we've only seen the GBA side of it.

Entitled 'Boktai' in Japanese, the game is a bizarre tale of cosmic evolution, set at the end of our solar system's existence. The universe has detected that our solar system is in its final cycles, and is trying to quicken its death. But it turns out our solar system has a sentient will of its own, and decides to fight back against extinction.

My Sun takes the form of an action RPG, and requires the player to represent the spirit of our solar system fighting to survive. The kicker is that you are required to collect actual solar energy to fight enemies. Not in-game. REAL sunbeams. The GBA cart has a solar panel attached to the back, which allows players to go outside and catch the sun's rays, which are somehow transmogrified into a power weapon within the game itself. Quite handy, as the GBA screen practically requires you to be standing directly underneath the sun to see anything. The perfect summer game.

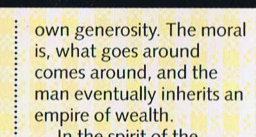
GAMECUBE AND ARCADE F-ZERO VERSIONS UNVEILED!

Sega/Amusement Vision's *F-Zero* game is here, and it's bloody amazing. On 23rd February, a little way outside of Tokyo, the Makuhari Messe exhibition hall played host to 2003's AOU show – Japan's annual showcase of the latest and greatest arcade games.

The show also marked the playable debut of *F-Zero* for Gamecube – identical in all ways to the arcade version being displayed (apart from the massive great arcade cabinet, obviously).

Frankly, it looks stunning, and is a strong contender for the most visually impressive Cube game to date. Sega also announced at the AOU show that a GC-arcade link will exist, although the precise nature of that connection hasn't be disclosed. For now, feast your eyes on the gorgeous new shots released at the show...

DID YOU KNOW?





The elaborate trading games seen in the recent *Zelda* titles (including the upcoming *Wind Waker*) are based on a real Japanese fairytale...

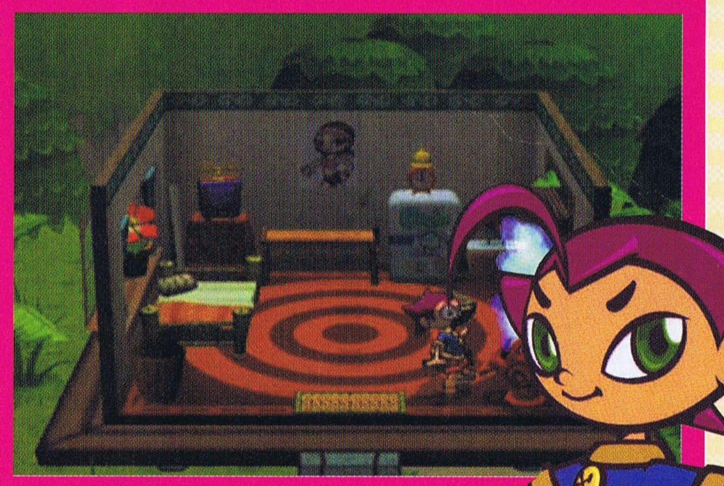
'Warashibe' is a word denoting an exchange of some sort that is to the mutual benefit of both parties. It's taken from an ancient Japanese story where a poor man possessed nothing but a blade of straw, but gave it away for the benefit of another. In return he received progressively larger gifts as a result of his own generosity. The moral is, what goes around comes around, and the man eventually inherits an empire of wealth.

In the spirit of the fairytale, people in Japan will often offer things out in Warashibe-style, because you never know who needs what, and what coincidences will cross your path. It is a thing that points to an important value in Japan – that of karma, which as you know is the force that rewards us for good deeds and punishes us for bad ones, as in the oft-said saying: "What goes around comes around."

Miyamoto originally derived the trading game that started in *Link's Awakening* from Warashibe. Nintendo called it *Warashibe* from the start and every person who played the game was undoubtedly reminded of the classic fairytale when they began to trade, and helping out people out of coincidence eventually led to a great reward for Link. This is a pretty good demonstration the concept of karma in action.

It was a big hit and much loved by the Japanese public, who all praised it as a lovely, nostalgic nod to the childhood tale. Since then, it has become a tradition in the series, and Japanese gamers look forward to seeing what kind of Warashibe Link will find this time. Keep a look out for examples of Warashibe in *The Wind Waker* – taken to the next level.

NINTENDO'S SECRET WEAPON: GIFTPIA



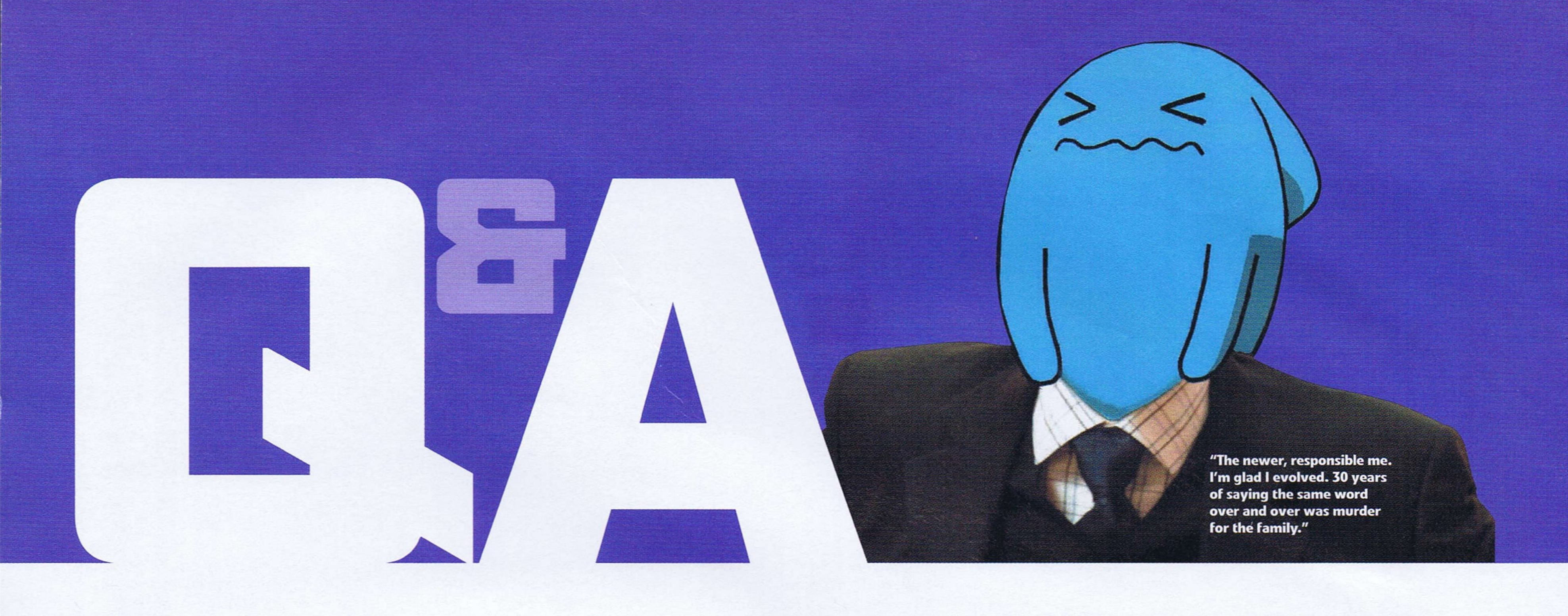
From time to time, we feel the obligation to publicise lesser-known gems in the Nintendo world. *Giftpia* is one such gem.

Developed by Skip Tokyo, and published in Japan by none other than Nintendo, *Giftpia* is currently billed as an 'alternative RPG'. As you can see from the shots, it's rather a bright and happy affair, filled with dippy little creatures and not looking so very different from *Animal Crossing*.

You play Pockul, a young chap on the cusp of his coming-of-age ceremony. Unfortunately, Pockul is a bit of a slacker, and sleeps through the entire event. Waking finally, Pockul is shocked to discover that he is still a child. He consults the head of the village. Turns out he has to raise money to redo the entire ceremony – at a cost of at least 5,000,000 mane. Which we assume is a lot. While the premise sounds pretty basic, we advise you look closer. *Giftpia* is from Skip Tokyo. And when Skip's involved, you can bet on something higher than a kite.

Skip Tokyo, incidentally, is one-third of the excellently named cult Japanese game design company Love-de-Lic – previously responsible for two of the barmiest, most inventive RPGs you never heard of: *Moon: Remix RPG Adventure*, and *UFO: A Day in the Life*. Needless to say, neither came to Europe. But the games were massive cult hits in Japan. Oh well...

COMING NEXT ISSUE... NINTENDO JAPAN: THE INSIDE STORY!



"The newer, responsible me. I'm glad I evolved. 30 years of saying the same word over and over was murder for the family."

INSIDE THE HEAD OF NOB

GOSSIP TIME! NGC delves into the brainial cavity of Nob Ogasawara, reclusive translator of the *Pokémon* games, and fishes out all the tastiest grey matter…


Nintendo might make the best games in the universe, but there's one niggling problem that constantly hinders enjoyment - the Japanese language. After many years poring over dusty tomes of hiragana and katakana, even the enormous, pulsing dome that is Kittsy's brain has trouble negotiating the yes/no prompts of the most thick-brained of insane-twitchy action games, let alone the bewildering maze of language that is *Winning Eleven 6*'s menu system.

Thank God for people like Nob Ogasawara, then. Nob has been working in the games industry since the 1980s, initially as a games journalist. But he's best known for translating swathes of Nintendo titles into English. **NGC** dispatched a heckler to his Tokyo villa to get the 'skinny'…



> "I HAD TO GO IN FOR SHOULDER SURGERY AND WHEN I PHONED MY EMPLOYER IN A GROGGY STATE AFTERWARDS ALL HE SAID WAS 'YOU'LL MAKE THE DEADLINE, RIGHT?'"


You started out as a games journalist. How did you end up translating games?

A *Heh, don't start me talking, I could talk all night. I got into the gaming industry as a journalist, blagging my way into a job by the dint of living in Tokyo between 1985 and 1996. I started out with long-since-dead British magazines, N-Force and Sega Force, both of which went bankrupt still owing me a fair whack of cash. Still, that opportunity got me gigs with EGM and Game Pro. I was covering the '95 Shoshinkai Show (I think) with Game Pro, and in usual fashion, I grabbed Nintendo VIPs on the show floor for impromptu interviews. As luck would have it, then-Executive VP Peter Main took a shine to me. That would have been in it if Mr Main hadn't happened to sit beside my Game Pro boss Wes Nihei on the bus to the airport. And Wes, bless his kind heart, gave Mr Main permission to have someone at Nintendo contact me. And the first thing that they offered to let me translate was Enix's Super Famicom Tenchi Souzou – Nintendo's SNES Terranigma. Like – wow, how lucky can a guy get? Sometimes, all it takes is to be in the right place at the right time. Of course you still have to have the moxie to pull it off, but that's another lecture in itself.*




Out of all the games you've translated, do you have any real favourites?

A *Oh, sheesh, I love them all in their own ways. Pokémon most certainly has been an awesome adventure in itself. The enormous success it's enjoyed - it's beyond imagination. I feel privileged to have been given the opportunity to help make it huge internationally. It's a huge source of pride, and not a little trepidation and anxiety – I know that the Japanese version is great, so I'd better not screw it up when I'm translating it. If I messed it up, I'd be doing an enormous disfavour to Game Freak, Creatures, Pokémon and Nintendo, but I'd also be letting down videogame fans. I think that's a sentiment common to everyone involved in making games. No one wants to screw up. That FEAR is what helps make Pokémon stand so high in terms of quality, I swear. This doesn't mean other game developers aren't as obsessive, but Pokémon… it's just different somehow.*

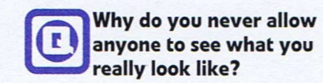
The Dragon Warrior *games were enormously satisfying to do:* Dragon Quest 4 *gave me the desire to consider videogame translation as a career choice. So, getting to do the remakes felt like a milestone.*



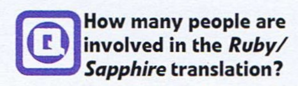
Torneko was a project that I really wanted to do. A company'd already translated the text, but made a total mess of it, so I volunteered my services for about a quarter of the industry rate. I did it at that nutty low price because I loved that game. I wanted to see that great dungeon-crawler get released so non-Japanese players could enjoy it. However, it turned out to be the project from hell. The deadline was insanely tight. In the final week, I had to go in for desperately needed shoulder surgery. I phoned my employer in a groggy state afterwards and the first words out of his mouth were: "You'll make the deadline, right?" I ended up working the final week in a wired state of pain and deadline fever, my arm in a sling, and my then nine-year-old daughter cutting and pasting text at my command. To add insult to injury, the game sold pitiably, and got voted the second-worst title of all time by OPM. A terrible shame, really – it's an addictive and challenging game that just takes a little getting used to.

I also loved doing Vandal Hearts 2 *— there's some seriously bent plotlines in there – the drooling sicko*

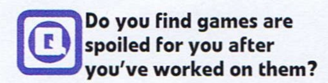
pervert of a jailkeeper, and so on. A shame someone I've never even heard of took the translation credit.


Why do you never allow anyone to see what you really look like?

It just doesn't feel right. I figure I'm only a stage-hand in the proceedings. Besides, I want to keep up the mystique.


How many people are involved in the *Ruby/Sapphire* translation?

Me, and a whole host of other people without whose support I'd be screwed.


Do you find games are spoiled for you after you've worked on them?

Not at all. I often work on games that have already been released (and that I've therefore played). And those that aren't? Well, by the time the localised version is released, I'd have moved onto other projects. My limited brain-RAM would have been flushed out, making the game a new experience for me.

How much of a Pokémon fan, and a gamer in general, are you in truth?

I watch the anime casually, and I've probably played the games for more than 1,000 hours. I play games for about three hours a day. I'd play more, but being a working man with a family to feed, educate and entertain, I don't have that sort of unproductive time to burn. It is tragic.

Do Nintendo step in much to tell you that you HAVE to change things?

Only occasionally, and justifiably so. It's a corroborative process. Plus, I've done enough to know how far I can push the envelope. With Pokémon, we keep very closely to the original Japanese text.


Is that ever artistically frustrating for you as a translator?

I'd be a liar if I tried to claim otherwise, but that's true for everyone who considers themselves to be creative. But quite honestly, I don't find it stifling – I relish the challenge of getting the point across succinctly, accurately and in a fun way.

What, in your opinion, is the most embarrassing re-naming of a Pokémon?

Hahahaha! Yeah, sure, I'm going to answer that one. In my honest opinion, EVERY renaming is utter PERFECTION, and I say this as one who has no part whatsoever in writing the variable names in CAPS LOCK.

What aspects of the original game scripts just can't cross the language barrier?

Puns. And magic mushroom gags might be acceptable in Japan, but not in most civilized countries.

Can you tell us anything about Nintendo's plans in the coming months?

I'm a sub-contractor, so they don't keep me in that loop at all. And, hey, if I did know and I blabbed, I'd be crucified.

Which Japanese games not translated into English do you think would work well?

Well, personally I'd love to see Nintendo release the Fire Emblem *series, and I'd love a crack at Banpresto's* Super Robot Wars *games, with all those anime mechs. Bandai's* Mobile Suit Gundam: Gihren's Greed *war sims would be fun, too.*

If you could have been involved in any translation in gaming history, what would it have been?

Hey, I'm living it now. I've already been involved in Pokémon *and* Dragon Quest *– all I need to do is land an FF gig, and I'd have completed the triple-crown of Japanese RPGs. Yeah, that'd do it – I'd love to get the shot at translating Square's still-unlocalised* Famicom FF3.



Whose work do you rate highly in the field of translation at the moment?

To be honest, I usually play games in Japanese. When I do play localised games, I usually get wonky looking at ways I'd try to improve on it. It's an occupational hazard I'm afraid.

Is there any anime that you particularly like? Any favourites of yours?

Miyazaki's Kurenai no Buta *(Porco Rosso).*

And your favourite *Pokémon*? There must be one you've got a soft spot for.

Gotta love 'em all. I simply can't choose between the little guys.

What do your kids think of the fact that their dad translates Pokémon?

I guess they think it's cool, but their comprehension seems sort of abstract. My nine-year-old son was playing Pokémon Red, *and while looking at the credits, said: "Hey, dad, some guy has the same name as you! It must be a coincidence."*

Do their friends bug you about it? Are you a very cool dad in their eyes?

Surprisingly not. They get disgusted with me when I have trouble remembering the names of all the Pokémon, though.

What are you playing, or wishing you had time to play, at the moment?

Zelda: The Wind Waker. *If you consider yourself a games fan, it is your DUTY to play it. I'm also leveling in* Ruby. *It's a great game – I hope you'll have a go.*
SIMON DOMINGUEZ

What has Nob Translated?

SNES *Terranigma.*

Game Boy *Dragon Quest 1-3, Dragon Quest Monsters 2, Pokémon Red/Blue/Yellow/Gold/Silver*

N64 *Pokémon Stadium 1 & 2*

PlayStation *Soul of the Samurai and Vandal Hearts 2 (both credited to someone else), Tenchu, Torneko: The Last Hope*

GBA *Yu-Gi-Oh Dungeon Dice Monsters, Pokémon Ruby/Sapphire*

PS2 *Robot Alchemic Drive*

"Me in my student days. With hindsight the long ears were a mistake."





Your guide to the Nintendo world's most exotic games.

MR DRILLER DRILL LAND



FACTS FOR THE TRAVELLER

GETTING THERE Travel packages available online, or via specialists such as the Japan Centre, London, or CA Games (Tel 0141 334 3901)
CURRENCY ¥6,800 (approx £35)
LANGUAGE Japanglishe
ELECTRICITY Japanese Gamecubes (100V; 50Hz) only
POPULATION Many midgets
DEVELOPMENT Namco
HEALTH RISKS Suffocation, falling rubble, being crushed

It's the happy happy joy joy land of day-glo colours and, er, drilling for glory...

HISTORY

Originally intended as a way for curious westerners to sample a quaint and colourful little slice of Japanese leisure culture, the Mr Driller franchise has come a long way from its humble roots. Past financial backers such as Sony and Sega have now been replaced by the more family-centred Nintendo company.

Soon after this shift of investment took place, the Mr Driller concept – where members of the public challenge themselves to complete high-pressure mining excavations – was expanded into an entire amusement park, called Mr Driller Drill Land.

EVENTS

Upon arrival visitors are required to select from one of five tour package options: World Drill Tour, Star Drill, Drindy Adventure, Hole of Druaga or Horror Night House. However, those of an indecisive nature should be reassured that transferring between events is permitted at a later date.

The main source of entertainment for each of the event comes in the form of drilling. Much like the good ol' gold rush in San Francisco all those years ago, the drilling concept has caught on big time, with people travelling from all over the world to chance their luck at this seemingly banal discipline. There's more at stake this time though, since it's not gold that these intrepid travellers lust for, but the simple unadulterated pleasure of a success rating, or a 'high score' as it's known colloquially.



TRAVEL TIP *Visitors are actively encouraged to participate in all of the five drill parks. Indeed, it is only when they have a level one certificate in them all that they are allowed access to further fun in the park of their choice.*

ATTRACTIONS

While pictorial evidence may suggest that Mr Driller Drill Land is a child-like and almost naive place, closer inspection reveals that much of the background ambience and paraphernalia has been deliberately chosen to reference the current 'cel-shading' design fad in the western world. This highly stylised approach has proved extremely popular with the young at heart.

TRAVEL TIP *The locals are a likeable people, but become especially animated should you show a genuine interest in their culture. Mention how the Hole Of Druaga area of Drill Land reminds you of the old PC Engine haunt The Tower Of Druaga and they'll be forever in your thrall!*

CULTURE

Despite the allusion to mass drilling, the Drill Land theme park has nothing to do with shock horror flicks such as Driller Killer. Rather, the whole area has been Disney-fied, so that patrons are greeted with a barrage of bright day-glo colours and cutesy style characters who owe more to Hello Kitty than Legend Of The Overfiend.

While the native form of communication includes the use of kanji symbols – which are all but impenetrable to the foreigner – the locals love to chatter away. Visitors should look out for local attempts to translate their speech into English – example: 'Welcome to fantastic underground!'.

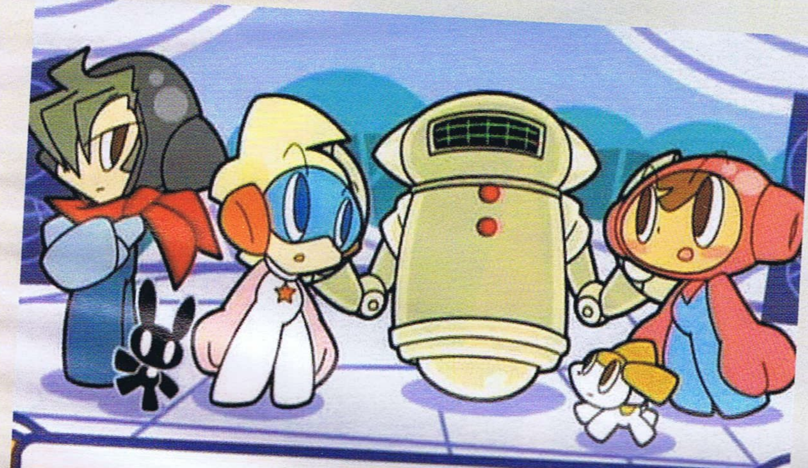
TRAVEL TIP *Pets and small children are both welcomed with open arms at Drill Land, but be warned that they are supervised at their own risk. It is not uncommon for a puppy to stray into a designated drill arena, and then suddenly find itself turning blue through a lack of oxygen. Be warned!*











ACTIVITIES

Along with the primary stress-relief of drilling, the Drill Land park is set up so that temporary residents may never feel the need to leave and spend their western currency elsewhere. As such, the complex hosts a comprehensive retail sector, where everything from Drill Land memorabilia (such as playing cards) to special items to assist in drilling activity may be found.

Additionally, a sharp-edged capitalist streak is pushed home through the promotion of the Gameboy Advance. A portable product manufactured by the latest investor in the Mr Driller chain, Nintendo, those staying at Drill Land are encouraged to purchase various novelty items of memorabilia which can be used with said unit. This, the owners hope, will ensure that Drill Land stays firmly in the hearts and minds of those who choose to visit.

However, in return for the good faith shown in contributing to the local economy, all guests to Mr Driller Drill Land are allowed to take part in the regular Dreamin' Parade. This technocoloured spectacle is Drill Land's very own Mardis Gras.

FURTHER READING

•http://www.namco.co.jp/home/cs/gc/mrdriller/index.html

USEFUL PHRASES

If all the drilling is getting you down, Mr Driller Drill Land offers some alternate takes on the basic drill-down-to-survive premise...



1. Dringy Adventure will be instantly recognisable to Western visitors, being that it apes the big screen action of the Indiana Jones franchise. As Hori Susumu though, you have to collect golden idols as you drill.



2. Hole of Druaga allows singletons to get out and meet new people by setting them the novel challenge of rescuing a damsel in distress. However, legal precedent mandates that, once rescued, there is no obligation to settle down to a life of domestic bliss.



3. Horror Night House has been added to Drill Land in an attempt to cash in on the current slasher horror flick fad going on in the US. Here, Holy Water can be collected to defend yourself against ghouls and ghosts.

